

**Exploring the role of Principal-Cum Teachers in a multi-grade school context: Evidence from five principals in one District of KwaZulu-Natal.**

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## **DECLARATION**

The work presented in this thesis is my own.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal certified ethical clearance for this study.

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Sikhulekile General Ngcobo

I declare that this thesis has been submitted with/ without my approval

Signed: Supervisor\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

## **ABSTRACT**

Globally, research shows that in many countries multi-grade teaching is practised. The research shows that in some countries this practice is exercised by choice and in other instances, it is by necessity. In the context of South Africa, it is exercised not by choice but as a necessity. It is one of the ways of ensuring that the Education For All goals are attained even in remote areas. In South Africa, the Constitution of the country, Act 108 of 1996, clearly spells out that all children have a right to learn irrespective of what the conditions are.

Research shows that multi-grade teaching is mostly practised in rural areas where the population is very low in such a way that children who are part of that society cannot make a class or a mono-grade in their school. This is due to the stipulations of the Post Provisioning Norms that is used in the context of South Africa which declares that the number of teachers stationed in the school is determined by the number of learners enrolled in the school. Research shows that in schools where multi-grade teaching is practised, principals are also engaged fully in teaching multi-grade classes. Therefore, in these schools, principals perform two crucial roles, leadership and management and multi-grade teaching. Principals are compelled to develop a knowledge base within the complexities of the actual classroom situation and also for administrative, leadership and management. In this study, these principals are regarded as principal-cum teachers.

This inquiry investigated the experiences of principal-cum teachers as heads of institution and also multi-grade teachers. Handling these two roles simultaneously requires some skills since it is two roles rolled on one hand. Through a multi-site case study design, involving five schools as sites and triangulated by conducting individual interviews, focus group interviews and observations, I focused on three issues. I focused on exploring their daily roles and how they experienced these roles; their different strategies employed to manage their multiple roles and finally looking at what we can learn from the principal-cum teachers regarding ways of better managing multi-grade schools.

The study is informed by Wenger's (1998) social practice theory where the focus is the four concepts found in the theory. The four concepts are meaning, identity, community and practice. Coupled with the social practice theory is the capability approach which assesses their functioning and capability. The findings reveal that principal-cum teachers are faced by multiple roles within one day which are normally performed by multiple members in a normal school environment. Findings unveil that the principal-cum teachers found it difficult to perform all their roles assigned to them in one day. Much of their time is spent in their multi-grade classes teaching learners. Furthermore, findings reveal that the principal-cum teachers are faced with a number of challenges in this context. To list a few, the curriculum is a problem because it is suitable for mono-grades and not for multi-grade. Funding in these schools is too less due to number of learners enrolled. The principal-cum teachers received very little support from the parents of learners as well as from the Department of Education. The floor space itself is a problem since they use classrooms as multi-purpose centres. Findings reveal that the principal-cum teachers felt neglected by the Department and are under-estimated by various stakeholders. They used a number of strategies to survive in schools that they managed, like fundraising, saving and prioritizing, working over-weekends and using their own coffers to run schools. These findings imply that there is a need for reviewing the policies in such a way that multi-grade schools are not disadvantaged. It also calls for the Department of Education to design suitable programs for assistance to multi-grade schools practitioners.

**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Ngigondile MaShandu Ngcobo, who sacrificed her life for death so that I could have my basic education. She always wanted us to learn irrespective of what the conditions were. Illiterate as she was but had the passion of education. With her Old Age Grant, she supported us. May her soul rest in peace, Gone but not forgotten.

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**ABBREVIATIONS IN THE STUDY**

ANA	: Annual National Assessment
ANAIIP	: Annual National Assessment Improvement Plan
ACE	: Advanced Certificate in Education
BA	: Bachelor of Art
B Ed	: Bachelor of Education
CAPS	: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CMC	: Circuit Management Centre
CMGE	: Centre for Multi-Grade Education
CSG	: Child Support Grant
CWP	: Community Work Programme
DSD	: Department of Social Development
DP	: Deputy Principal
DSSP	: Discipline Safety and Security Plan
EFA	: Education For All
EMASA	: Education Management Association of South Africa
EMIS	: Education Management Information System
FDE	: Further Diploma in Education
FGI	: Focus Group Interview
HDE	: Higher Diploma in Education
HOD	: Head of Department
II	: Individual Interview
IIP	: Infrastructure Improvement Plan



IQMS	: Intergrated Quality Management System
JPTD	: Junior Primary Teachers' Diploma
KZNDOE	: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
LTSM	: Learner Teacher Support Material
MA	: Mixed Age
NCS	: National Curriculum Statement
NEPA	: National Education Policy Act
NLTSM	: Non-Learner Teacher Support Material
NPA	: National Protocol for Assessment
NPDE	: National Professional Diploma in Education
NPPPPR	: National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements
NSNP	: National School Nutrition Programme
PCT	: Principal-Cum Teacher
PFMA	: Public Finance Management Act
PL	: Post Level
PMDP	: Principals' Management Development Programme
PPN	: Post Provisioning Norms
SAASS	: South African Annual School Survey
SACE	: South African Council of Educators
SADBE	: South African Department of Basic Education
SAEPC	: South African Education Policy Consortium
SASA	: South African Schools Act

SASAMS	: South African School Administration Management System
SASSA	: South African Social Security Agency
SDP	: School Development Plan
SGB	: School Governing Body
SIP	: School Improvement Plan
SMT	: School Management Team
SPTD	: Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma
TSS	: Transformation of the Schooling System
UNESCO	: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisations

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### ***1.1.Introduction***

The study explored leadership and management experiences and coping strategies of ordinary teachers who were simultaneously principals of schools and also engaged in teaching multi-grade classes in schools in one District of Sisonke, in Ixopo Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal. In order to achieve this, there were specific aims that the study sought to achieve and from these specific aims, the research questions were designed. To get deeper to the real phenomenon, preferred methods and methodology were employed and utilized throughout the study. The presented findings are as a result of the data that was collected utilizing the selected methodology to explore the identified area of study.

The aim of this introductory chapter is to orient the reader to the study to develop an understanding of the nature and structure of the study. This chapter commences by laying a background and rationale of the study. It also contains the statement of purpose and the statement of the problem. Thereafter in the next section it encapsulates the aims of the study as well as the research questions that the study attempts to investigate in the context of teaching and learning as well as leadership and management in schools. The next section focuses on the significance of the study and some key concepts found in this study. Finally, a brief tour guide for the entire thesis is also presented to give the reader a picture of the journey that s/he will take as s/he reads this thesis.

#### ***1.2.Background to the study***

The effectiveness and good quality of education depends on the way it is managed and led at various levels. In the education system, there are various managers and leaders at different levels, i.e. National, Provincial, District and Circuit levels as well as institutional level. At levels

like the national and provincial levels, it is where regulations and policies pertaining to the education system are drawn. The district and circuit levels are the two levels which ensure that the schools adhere to and implement those policies that they need to take into consideration. The school is the implementation level where everything, and all the plans that the other levels have designed, are implemented. Therefore, in the school as an implementing zone there is a great need for proper understanding of related educational policies and appropriate implementation to achieve aims and goals as set in policies, regulations and legislations. This is also possible if the conditions in the organization are conducive for implementation.

In South Africa, for a school to function effectively, it has to make sure that it functions and aligns itself with the prescribed educational policies such as National Education Policy Act (NEPA) 27 of 1998, the South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996, Employment of Educators Act (EEA) 76 of 1998, Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 1 of 1999, etc. (Bhagowat, 2006; Dlungwane, 2012). The South African Department of Education (1996, p.25) states “New education policies require managers who are able to work in a democratic and participative ways to build relationships and ensure efficient and effective delivery”. To ensure compliance in the practice, school principals have to ensure that the schools operate in such a way that they align themselves with those policies. For an example, we have policies that are specifically prescribed for curriculum in schools, like the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) (2012) in the context of South Africa. These policies encapsulate times allocated for subjects, specific outcomes that have to be achieved, assessment criteria, assessment tasks, etc. In order for a school to function fruitfully and for the benefit of the community it serves, it has to make sure that it adheres to the policies, legislations as well as prescribed regulations. Therefore, school principals as heads of institutions need to have a sober and clear mind when dealing with these issues to ensure benefit for the schools. They are the main figures that give clear directions and guidelines for implementation and proper functioning in schools.

In schools, it is the formal management structure called the School Management Team (SMT) that ensures that everything is done in a meaningful and beneficial way. This structure consists of

the Heads of Department (HOD), Deputy Principal (DP) and Principal. Each of these members in this structure has a role that s/he plays in the management of the school. The principal as the Head of the institution is the accounting officer for everything in the school (Barth, 1998). He takes a lead in the policy formulation at the school level, is the one who gives direction and offers guidance to both the teachers and the learners in the school. It is then vital for him or her to have adequate time and relevant acquired knowledge to perform these crucial roles so that s/he is able to give clear and meaningful directions and guidance to the personnel in the organization.

In South Africa, the roles of principals are clearly spelt out in the Educators Employment Act (EEA), 78 of 1998. According to the stipulations of this act, the purpose of the principalship job is to ensure that the school is managed effectively and conforming with applicable Personnel Administrative Measures, legislations and regulations. The principal has roles that are categorized according to duties that s/he performs in that particular category (EEA, 78 of 1998; Jones and Connolly, 2001). Amongst those roles, s/he is expected to perform administrative roles, personnel roles, teaching, contribute to extra and co-curricular activities, interact with stakeholders and s/he is also involved in a series of correspondence between the institution and other various stakeholders. These roles in South Africa as spelt out in the EEA are similar to the roles of principals in the United Kingdom as spelt out by Jones and Connolly (2001). Jones and Connolly (2001) cite that principals have roles of administration, monitoring, planning and reflecting, maintenance of the school, dealing with external agencies and developing the persona of the school. Within these roles there are also a number of sub activities involved. All these roles require the undivided attention from the school principal so that they are performed effectively for the benefit of the school community and all the other members of the society.

The EEA 78 of 1998 explicitly promulgates that principals are expected to teach between 10% and 92% of their time depending on which post level appointed to. Principals that participated in this study were appointed at lower levels in the principalship ranking as a result of the enrolment figures in their institutions. These principals were appointed as Post Level (PL) two principals, which is equivalent to the level of the Head of Department in an ordinary primary or secondary

school. The low enrolment figures in their schools cause them to have multi-grade classes and not to have other personnel like Deputy Principal and Heads of Department that other bigger schools with high enrolment figures have. The big concern is this: if these schools do not qualify for these other personnel members, it is then these principals that perform the roles that the others should be performing in the institutions. The fact that these principals are handling multi-grade classes makes them to go beyond between 10% and 92% of their time as stipulated in EEA; they are committed by 100% time in teaching multi-grade classes and performing all the other related classroom activities.

The principal as the head is the one who sees to it that the teaching and learning process is implemented correctly and implementers apply the approved policies. The Deputy Principal assists the Principal to run the school smoothly. S/he acts as the principal when the principal is not available, performing all the roles that the principal plays. The HOD is the curriculum specialist; s/he assists the teachers in their practice on curriculum matters. The HOD ensures that the teachers have all the material that they need during the teaching and learning process. In support of the teaching staff, we also get the non-teaching support staff that support with duties like administration, cleaning, security services etc. The unavailability of one member in the management structure in the school would mean that it is incomplete and someone else will have to perform the roles that are assigned to the unavailable member/s.

This study focused on the schools that had low enrolment figures. In these schools, principals were the only members of the SMT and there were no other members because of the numbers of learners, which was low and that disqualified them in meeting minimum requirements for being granted additional management posts. The case in these schools is that it is not a team but it is an individual or one person who serves in the so called „team“. Principals were expected to use their strategies and skills to perform the roles that should be performed by all the members of the SMT. In all these schools, principals were expected to teach multi-grade classes. They were expected to execute all the classroom administrative roles ensuring that the situation did not disadvantage learners. They were also expected to perform all the administrative duties that were

supposed to be done by administrative staff. They were expected to attend principals' meetings as heads of institutions so that they obtained all the information required for effective school management. Looking at all the roles that the principals perform in these schools, I therefore found it worthy to conduct a study on these principals. It became imperative to explore the practice of these principals who are multi-tasking in schools that they manage due to inadequate human resources. The study focused to the principals' leadership and management experiences as principals of schools with low enrolment figures and also engaged in teaching multi-grade classes. This study also hoped to elicit the successes and challenges that these principals had. The major hope is that there is a lesson regarding leadership and management that can be learnt from school principals who are in this situation. Amongst the lessons that can be learnt is to understand how these principals balance their core duty which is teaching the learners and being the Heads of institutions with small enrolment figures.

### ***1.3.Statement of purpose***

Basically, the study investigated the real life and management experiences of principals in the schools with low enrolment figures in the Ixopo Circuit which is an area in the midlands of KwaZulu-Natal. This study hopes to elicit the experiences of these principals in as far as formal and informal leadership is concerned. In order for this study to be effective, it was conducted with principals who were involved and practised in this situation. They were the main participants who provided in-depth data required for the study because of their involvement in the situation. The participants were five principals from these schools with low enrolment figures. All these principals were principals from primary schools.

### ***1.4.Statement of the problem***

The major problem in this study lies within teachers who are principals of schools and simultaneously engaged in teaching multi-grade classes. The main issue is that the duty load of the principal in the school is packed and attached with a number of sub-activities to be performed. According to Van Der Westhuizen (2002), from the description of the management

procedures in a school, it is clear from the presuppositions that policy and control, delegating, decision making and organizing, planning and leading, interpersonal relations, leadership and motivation will be an integral part of the education management action. Principals are expected to carry out certain specific management tasks within a management area.

A number of scholars like Louis Allen (1964), Terry (1974), Robbins (1980) and Marx (1981) have discussed a number of activities that are performed by principals of schools. All these scholars agree that planning is one of the management tasks in the school environment, which is what the principal-cum teachers as sole SMT members in schools under study were engaged in. Allen (1964) lists a number of sub-tasks that fall under this task. To cite a few: a principal of a school is the one that takes a lead in setting objectives for the organization, forecasting and programming. Davids (2011), a principal involved in managing a multi-grade school in the Western Cape, contends that it takes a special kind of a person to manage a small school, promoting the school's vision, promoting his/her own vision for the school and still striving to provide quality education to the learners. Principals of small multi-grade schools are expected to guide and support staff, mobilize parents and the community to get involved and at the same time they are still responsible for teaching a multi-grade class full time. In the study conducted by Drost, Magau and Mdekazi (1998), a number of management roles by principals in multi-grade schools were outlined. They asserted that in multi-grade schools principals strive to involve others in management and to focus on policies. This elicits the extra mile that the principals of small schools travel in ensuring effective management in schools. Coupled with their leadership, management and administrative roles as principals of schools, are their management and administrative roles as subject teachers in their multi-grade classes.

In the study that was conducted by Taole and Mncube (2012) about multi-grade teaching and quality of education in South African North West and Northern Cape province rural schools, the findings were that teachers engaged in multi-grade classes felt that they were overloaded and wished that their schools could be allocated more teachers to assist them in their practice. In the very same study, teachers indicated that they found it challenging to manage different grades at



the same time. Therefore, at this juncture there are two roles placed on one person and that becomes more complex and there is not enough literature as to how principals in this situation perform their roles and that is what this study endeavours to contribute. Another sub-task in this task that the principal performs is budgeting. This includes financial budgeting which is the process that requires much of the principal's time considering the needs and the funds allocated for the school. David (2011), a principal managing a small multi-grade school, expressed that in the context of multi-grade schools this was not an easy exercise because as a principal he managed a school with limited funds. The principal is also the one who schedules meetings for personnel and staff development sessions whenever there is a need for that. The principal is also the one who takes a lead in the policy formulation process and s/he has to make sure that all the stakeholders are involved so that they develop a sense of ownership of those policies. All these sub-activities require the undivided attention from the principal as the accounting officer.

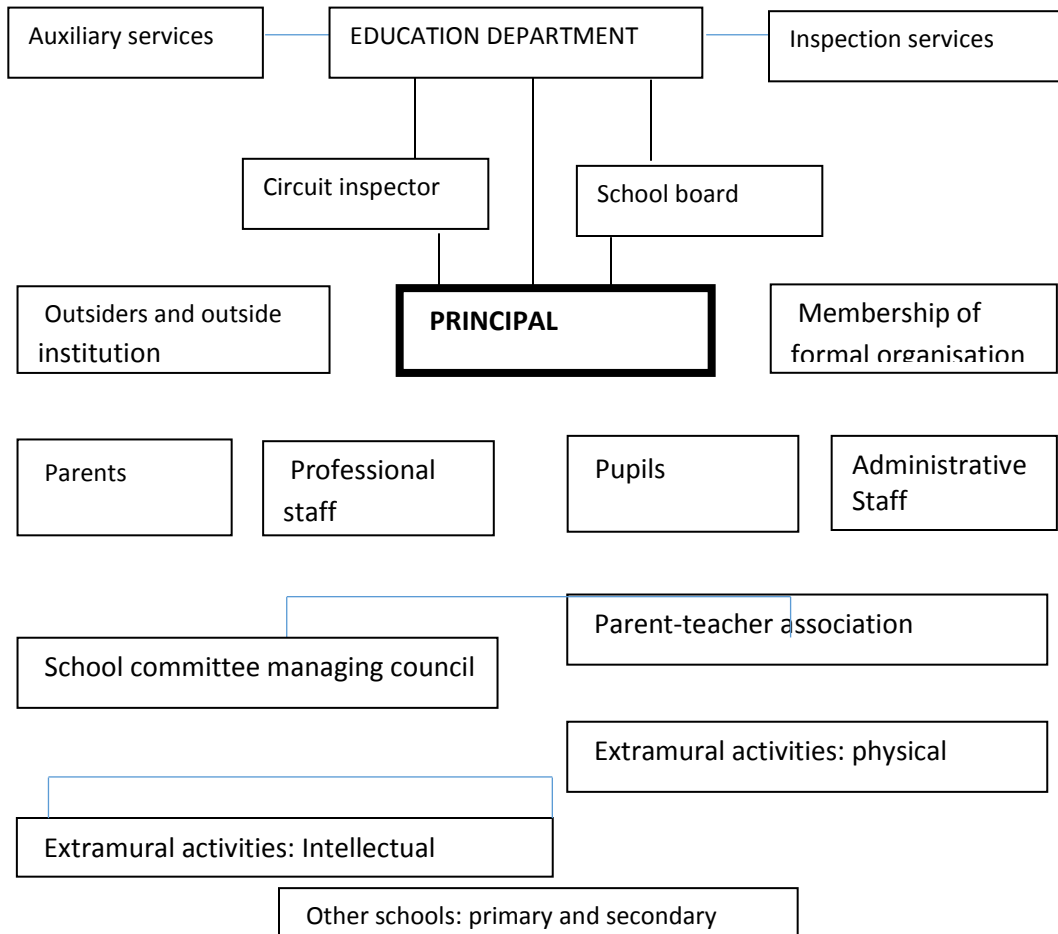
The next management task by the principal is organizing. In this task, the principal has a number of sub-tasks that are also performed by him. Allen (1964) states that it is the responsibility of the principal to devise an organizational structure, delegate some duties to suitable people with relevant expertise and also it is the principal's tasks to establish relationships within and outside the school so that there would be smooth functionality amongst all the stakeholders. In as far as delegating is concerned Starr and Simone (2008) states that principals of small schools do not enjoy this privilege like their urban metropolitan counterparts do. They claim that in larger urban and rural schools, principals enjoy the opportunity of delegating some of their tasks to other teachers and that allows them the chance to focus on effective management of the school. They further state that due to small numbers of teachers in multi-grade schools, principals do not enjoy this luxury. The principal-cum teachers are also faced with roles of organising the multi-grade classroom setting. In the study conducted by Taole (2014), the teachers indicated they were overwhelmed by the high number of learners in their classes. The teachers revealed that they found it very difficult to organize their classes. In this study, this is the task that is not facing just an ordinary Post Level one teacher only faced with multi-grade, but it is the principal of a school who has to be faced with this.

Another management task by the principal is leading and this task too also has a number of sub-tasks. Allen (1964) and Marx (1981) share the same sentiments and similar views about the sub-tasks in this task. The two authors complement each other and agree that the principal of the school takes the lead in communication and decision making in the organization. In order for good working conditions to prevail, good communication and healthy, just decision making process is required. The principal as the person on top of the hierarchy sees to it that people that s/he works with are teachers who are motivated and understand the ethics of the profession that they serve. The principal as a leader ensures that s/he is at the front in the staff selection process and becomes the one who initiates the induction and orientation processes internally and also initiates in service training sessions to professionalise people with whom s/he works. In the study conducted by Gomes (2013) in the Western Cape province of South Africa focusing on the support systems in South Africa for multi-grade teachers and principals, it was revealed that there is a great need for quick remedies in this practice because principals find it difficult to give clear directions due to the amount of work placed on them.

The last management task, which Allen (1964) names, is controlling. In performing this task, in the school, the principal takes the lead in setting the required standards that should guide all the people working inside. It becomes vital for the standard of work to be measured and evaluated. The principal as the figurehead and the person bearing the vision of the school is the one who must conduct the measuring and evaluation process so that it should be discovered as to how to improve in those areas that require improvement and these are the corrective actions, which is one of the sub-tasks that s/he plays. As a multi-grade class teacher, the principal-cum teacher is also faced with the task of ensuring control and discipline of learners. In the study conducted by Taole (2014) on problems in rural multi-grade schools, teachers revealed that classroom management was particularly a challenge for them. Teachers indicated that they did not know how to maintain discipline in their classes as in most cases learners were noisy. Classroom management were also identified to be challenging in the study conducted by Blease (2014) about writing practices in two foundation phase rural multi-grade classes in the South African Western Cape province. Teachers reported that they found it difficult to control their classes due to large numbers. These concerns are also consistent with findings by Drost et al (1998).

All the management tasks revealed in this section make it clear that the principal has many areas where s/he manages. It has been learnt in the above discussion that the school principal stretches his/her arms to many areas in school matters. Literature on the subject indicates that authors agree on the task areas of the principal. Getzels, Lipham and Campbell (1968); Lipham and Hoeh (1974; Gorton (1976); Campbell, Bridges and Nystrand (1977), Castetter (1982), Rebore (1982), Kimbrough and Nunnery (1983) point out that the principal has the following management areas: staff, pupil, curriculum and teaching, physical facilities and financial affairs. In all these management areas it is where the principal-cum teacher exercises the management tasks and sub-tasks. In a similar vein, Potgieter (1972), presents a diagram which illustrates the role set of school principal which illustrates the complexity of his/her role. Figure 1.1 displays the role of the school principal and the school environment.

### Potgieter's (1972) representation of the role set of a school principal



**Figure 1.1: The role of the school principal and his task environment**

The principal-cum teachers involved in this study are given this name because of their involvement in the two crucial roles in the school functionality. The other huge task put on their shoulders is handling multi-grade classes. In the context of South Africa, the job description of classroom based subject teachers is clearly spelt out in the EEA. The EEA states it clearly that the classroom-based teacher is expected to engage himself/ herself in progressive teaching in

agreement with respective subjects and grades. In this task, the teacher is compelled to prepare lessons taking into account orientation, district courses, new approaches, techniques, evaluation and aids in their fields. S/he is also expected to co-ordinate, control, administer, evaluate and report authentically on learners' academic progress. The policy further states that the teacher has to ensure learning is engaging and utilises multiple strategies to achieve the curriculum outcomes. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to establish a conducive learning environment. In the context of multi-grade school, the principal is compelled to ensure that these crucial activities are administered appropriately.

The EEA further stipulates that the teacher is also compelled to manage all the academic activities related to subjects being taught. As a subject teacher, s/he is expected to control and organize learning activities and control stock and equipment which is used for her/his subject. Being the subject teacher, the teacher has to co-operate with colleagues from all grades in order to maintain a good teaching standard and progress among learners and to foster administration efficiency within the school. In order to provide good quality reporting to the parents, the teacher must organise consultation or open day sessions whereby parents meet with him or her to discuss progress of their children.

In these schools where these principals manage, both these crucial roles are performed by them due to the conditions of inadequate human resources. This situation is a result of a problem of low enrolment figures in the schools that these principals lead. The Post Provisioning Norms (PPN) for the determination of educators' posts in these schools do not allow them to have a large number of teachers since the number of teachers is determined by the number of learners enrolled in that particular school. The Teacher-Pupil ratio at the time of study in KwaZulu-Natal was 1:32. Among the schools that are sites of this study, three of them were two-teacher schools due to number of enrolled learners and in these schools multi-grade classes became the necessity (Brunswic & Valerien, 2004; Little, 2005). In a school setting, management personnel have to ensure that all is in order and it is according to policies in place. Proper functioning of the school is complex since it involves planning, organizing, leading and controlling and has to be

performed to such an extent that all the stakeholders become satisfied. Similarly, multi-grade teaching on its own is complex since it involves a number of roles assigned to a classroom-based teacher who handles the class. The principal-cum teachers involved had to perform these two crucial tasks simultaneously. We do not have knowledge of how these crucial tasks in the school environment are well managed by the same person. The Department of Education expects good quality leadership and management of schools to achieve good results and also expects good quality teaching and learning that produces productive learners. Hence, this study sought to explore their management experiences as principals and teachers teaching multi-grade classes.

In November 2012, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDOE) released a discussion document about Transforming the Schooling System (TSS) in KwaZulu-Natal. This document contained a number of aims that it intended to achieve and one of them was to transform small and non-viable schools and eliminate multi-grade teaching schools in the province. The statistics of multi-grade schools contained by the document revealed that in 2012 the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education had 769 multi-grade schools. The strategy that was recommended in this issue was to close down multi-grade schools and learners were to be transferred to other schools in the area that had the capacity to accommodate them. The document stated that the KZNDOE would arrange transport for the affected learners. The management plan for the programme shows that this programme was supposed to have been finalized by 30 March 2013. The obstacles to this programme were the financial implications that would be incurred through the commencement of the closure of these multi-grade schools. One of the major logistical factors that hindered the transformation process was the transportation of learners from the schools to be closed to other viable schools. As a result multi-grade schools still continue to operate. This then puts us in position to consider these schools as schools that we are likely to continue having in the society irrespective of what their conditions are; therefore I have been triggered to conduct a study about principals working in these schools.

Looking at the logistical factors involved in this Transformation of the Schooling System, I am of the opinion that multi-grade teaching is not likely to go away soon, so it is important to have

some information about them and how they operate. Therefore, I think the tour that I took to explore leadership and management experiences of principal-cum teachers in these schools was vital. The principal-cum teachers play two crucial roles in the life of the school, which is ensuring good school management together with the implementation of the core business of the school, which is teaching and learning. The study then explored their experiences of managing their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools and I believe there is something that can be learnt through their experiences. This study allowed me the opportunity to learn the challenges and obstacles that they encounter in this situation and also learn the strategies that they employ to operate in this unfamiliar situation of practice. I am also of the opinion that through this study there is a lesson that can be learnt regarding ways of better managing multi-grade schools.

### ***1.5.Aims of the study***

The study had three aims which it focused to explore. The aims are:

- (i) To explore the principal-cum teachers' experiences of managing their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools,
- (ii) To explore how do these principal-cum teachers seek to better manage and lead schools,
- (iii) To explore what can we learn from the principal-cum teachers regarding ways of better managing multi-grade schools.

### ***1.6.Research questions***

- (i) What are the daily roles of principal-cum teachers and how they experience their multiple roles in the context of multi grade schools?
- (ii) How do the principal-cum teachers seek to lead and manage their roles?
- (iii) What can we learn from the principal-cum teachers regarding ways of better leading and managing multi-grade schools?

The study was guided by the three research questions. Different aspects and perspectives that would lead to the discovery of possible answers to the unknown about the area of focus were contained in the research questions. The questions allowed me to be able to get possible answers and experiences of the principal-cum teachers in their practice. Hence, I believe this section is vital in this study, where the research questions are discussed to develop understanding to the reader.

The main focus in this study was on principals of schools managing small multi-grade schools. Managing a school involves actions of planning, organizing, co-ordinating, commanding and controlling (Boshoff, 1981). Managers perform these activities in a number of roles in the organization. In exploring these roles I decided to consider the ten management roles as stipulated by Mintzberg (1973). Mintzberg's role description is a representation of the managers' tasks as an integrated whole and the organized set of expectations which determine the functioning of the office of manager (Van Buuren, 1979). I share the similar feeling as Moolman (1978) who found that the educational leader's management roles fit into Mintzberg's model. These roles identified by Mintzberg also correlate with the job description of principals as spelt out in the South African Employment of Educators Act.

The main focus in the research questions was on these principals as managers of schools performing the ten roles as contained in the model and also engaged in teaching multi-grade classes where they were stationed. In this model used in designing the research questions, the roles are divided into three categories and the first one is interpersonal category with three roles. I wanted to look at the principal performing his role as the figurehead in the organization. According to Van Der Westhuizen (2002), because of the formal authority and status, the principal is the ceremonial head of the school and this is irrespective of the size of the school. In this capacity, the principal is expected to sign certain documents, to speak to visitors or to make speeches at functions. Parents and teachers want to address him/her directly because they believe to the man at the top of the hierarchy and this role is time-consuming and requires patience and



charismatic responses (Van Der Westhuizen, 2002). In this model, the manager is also expected to be a leader. According to Mintzberg (1973) leadership entails the interpersonal relationships between the educational leader and his staff. In the school, the principal-cum teachers as leaders are expected to integrate individual needs and organizational activities. The leadership role of the educational leader invests him/her with potential power and his action as a leader will determine how much of his/her power is realized. The third role in this category is the liaison role which the principal has to perform. This liaison role refers to the network of meaningful relationships which the principal-cum teacher has with innumerable individuals within and outside the school. The liaison activity involves the action of creating a link between the school and the environment and timeously obtaining important information for the organization.

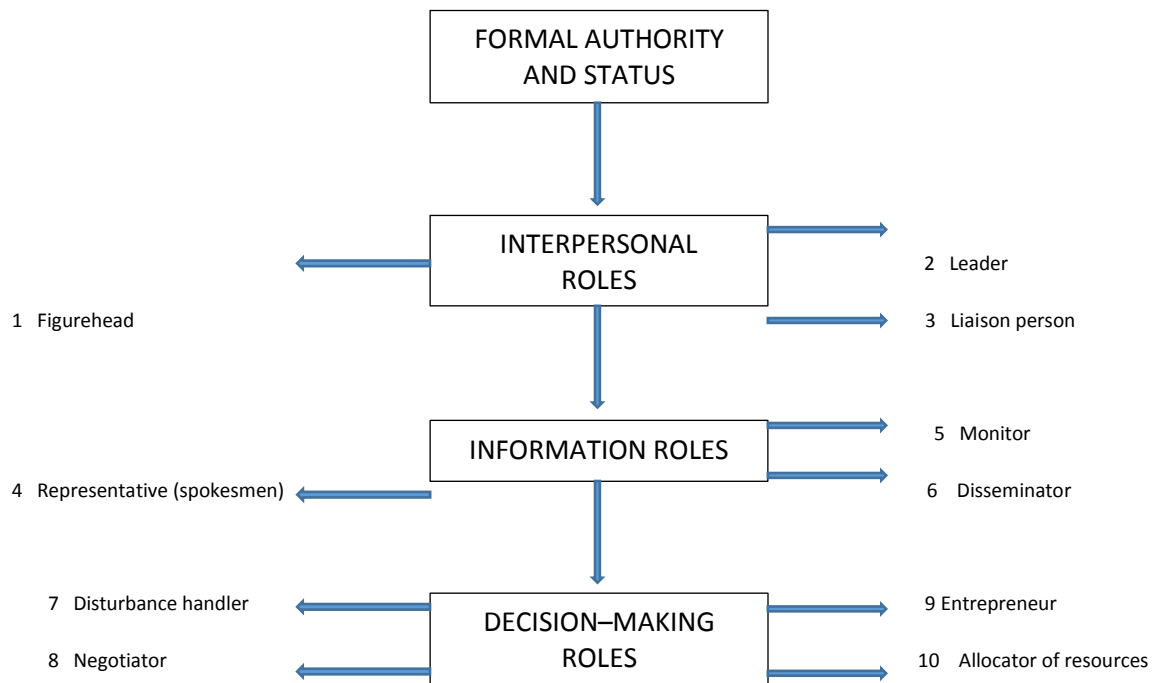
The second category of roles in Mintzberg's model is the information role. In this category there are three roles attached and they are representative role, monitor or evaluator role and dissemination role. In this aspect, the focus is on principals-cum-teachers as representatives representing the school in the school environment and outside the school. According to Van Der Westhuizen (2002) the outside world sees the educational leader as someone who is knowledgeable in matters which affect the school and as a person who understands the task of the school. In the manager's role as a monitor or evaluator the manager receives much of the information into his/her office. The information received is not only important for dissemination but also for change and problem identification therefore the monitor sifts this information, determines its reliability and importance and establish which tendencies emerge. The educational leader is expected to decide who should receive the message and when must it reach the person. For this purpose effective communication channels and resources are necessary. Therefore the research questions tried to investigate how the principal-cum teachers experienced performing these roles in the context of multi-grade schools as principals of schools and multi-grade class teachers.

The third category in Mintzberg's model is decision making role placed on the shoulders of the principal-cum teachers. In this category, managers are disturbance handlers, negotiators,

allocators of resources and entrepreneurs. The educational leader as a disturbance handler is expected to journey with the staff members through the transformation process. The educational leader has to deal with irregularities to everyone's satisfaction. The educational leader or the principal is the one who negotiates on behalf of the school for facilities and resources that the organization requires and ensures that the resources are available on time. Being placed in this situation of multi-tasking, one of the key things that is important is time, which is regarded as the important resource by Mintzberg. The principal as the figurehead determines what will receive attention and what will not.

In a nutshell, for the principal-cum teachers as people working in an unfamiliar condition it then became pertinent to understand their daily roles in this situation and also learn how they experienced their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools. In this question, I looked at them performing principals' roles and handling multi-grade classes simultaneously. In their case, the roles designed for two different people are performed by one person and this opens the gap as to how they experience and manage performing their multiple roles. The second question focuses on how they seek to lead and manage their roles in this context. This comes up after sharing their experiences and considering the way they do things in this situation to keep the fire burning irrespective of the conditions. The third question focuses on the lessons learnt based on their responses on how they handle the roles for two different personnel simultaneously.

The following ten management roles were utilized in the formation of the research questions. The ten roles are according to Mintzberg (1973)



**Figure 1.2 Management roles according to Mintzberg**

### ***1.7.Rationale for the study***

When I was a learner in the Foundation Phase in the 1980s, I attended a school where multi-grade teaching was practised. The school was a two- teacher school and one of the teachers was the school principal. The school principal was also teaching multi-grade class which was Grade 1 and Grade 2 and the other teacher was responsible for Grade 3 and Grade 4. The principal had to perform all the classroom administrative roles and perform school management administrative roles. This is one of the presses that made me decide to conduct a study on the leadership

experiences of principals in schools with multi-grade classes. This is the situation that still exists in some South African schools even today. This was exposed in the Annual Schools survey: Report for ordinary schools in South Africa for 2010 and 2011 as published in 2013. The report spells out that in 2011, approximately 21% (5 339) ordinary schools in the country had multi-grade classes. The majority of these schools were in the Eastern Cape (1 929) followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 815 schools. The report further unveils something alarming about this practice, about one third (approximately 34%) of the ordinary schools in the Eastern Cape reported that they had multi-grade classes while 30% of ordinary schools in the Northern Cape did so. Gauteng reported the least (approximately 12%) proportion of schools with multi-grade classes in 2011. According to this report, nationally there was a decrease in number of schools with multi-grade classes from 6 694 in 2010 to 5 339 in 2011 which is approximately 14% decrease. However, four provinces (Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and the Western Cape) showed a slight increase in number of schools with multi-grade classes over this two year period. Looking at the Annual Survey report as published in 2013, it becomes clear that South Africa has a large number of schools with multi-grade classes, especially in provinces like the Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape, where about one third of the schools practise multi-grade. The report shows that there is a slight decrease nationally in the number of schools practising multi-grade but in some of the provinces of the country, the number of schools increases. This then indicates that multi-grade schools are unlikely to go away soon and while they operate it is important to have some knowledge of how the practitioners practising in these schools perform their duties.

Multi-grade practice existence is also revealed in the different studies conducted by Drost, Magau and Mdekazi (1998), Ngubane (2011), Lumby and Azaola (2011), Taole and Mncube (2012), Gomes (2013), Blease (2014) and Subramanien (2014). All these scholars conducted their studies in multi-grade teaching in different provinces of South Africa. Ngubane (2011) conducted her study in the context of KwaZulu-Natal province, in the South Coast and she focused on Post Level one teachers teaching multi-grade classes and in this study the focus was on their experiences handling learners of different grade levels. In the province of the Free State, Drost et al (1998) also conducted a study based on the classroom practices in the province. A similar study was also conducted by Subramanien (2014) in the Province of Eastern Cape in

South Africa where the focus was on the exploration of the challenges experienced by a group of 19 multi-grade teachers in the Uitenhage District. None of these studies has focused specifically on principals of schools engaged simultaneously in the management of the school and handling a multi-grade class. It is imperative to have some knowledge of institutional management experiences of these principals as managers working under abnormal conditions. I am of the opinion that this study can add something of value to the literature of multi-grade teaching in South Africa, particularly by principals of schools.

As a school principal, I work with principals who manage multi-grade schools. There are quite a number of these schools in our area because most of this area is made up of farms. I have been observing these principals; they are always invited to attend meetings for principals, attend sessions for professional development and workshops for leadership and management. As principals, they are always expected to make submissions to the circuit office for onward transmission to the district office and the service centre. These submissions involve a lot of administration, consultation, communication and involvement of other stakeholders before they take place. These activities force these principals to be always out of classrooms. These principals work under demanding conditions with all roles attached needing their undivided attention from the same person since they do not have other support personnel members. Studies on multi-grade teaching conducted by Drost et al (1998), Ngubane (2011), Taole and Mncube (2012) and Subramanien (2014) revealed that multi-grade teaching is a bit challenging because the curriculum that the implementers have to teach is designed for a mono-grade class and yet the implementers have to implement it to multi-grade classes. This made them spend most of their time in classrooms trying to cover the scope as prescribed for different grades they taught. Thus, one of my concerns was to explore the principals' daily roles in the context of multi-grade schools. This was to attempt looking at how they combined their two crucial roles in schools. If they have such demanding assignments to perform in their practice, I therefore also wanted to know what provisions they made for learners if they had to attend this string of meetings that the Department of Education organizes. Are these learners provided with education in such a way that they achieve all the learning outcomes stipulated for each subject? Are these learners assessed fairly and all areas of assessment covered holistically? All these questions pertaining to

curriculum, aroused interest within me to embark on a study about these principals' life experiences in their schools as head of institutions and being committed to full time in teaching multi-grade classes.

I hope the study of this nature can produce knowledge that can assist in policy formulation regarding school management. In a study conducted by Subramanien (2014) challenges that were discovered were related to curriculum and the concern was that the policies suited mono-grade classes. The conditions in multi-grade learning institutions are different to the conditions in normal schools with mono-grades. All schools are bound to implement the same set of policies and not considering the conditions in different schools. This study hopes to produce knowledge that might be useful to the District and Circuit Education Managers when they consider the needs of the schools. This will be due to their understanding of what actually happens in multi-grade schools particularly in leadership and management. The study that was conducted by Lumby and Azaola (2011) which focused on women leadership in small schools in Gauteng and North West Provinces of South Africa does not say anything about the strategies that these principals employed in the context of small schools to manage. Through this study I believe there are lessons that can be learnt regarding ways of better managing small schools drawn from the data generated on strategies that the principal-cum teachers employ in managing multi-grade schools.

### ***1.8. Significance of the study***

The roles and duty loads of principals in the context of South Africa as well as the percentage of time to be spent by principals teaching in South Africa have been presented in this chapter. South Africa also has an act which is known as the SASA, 84 of 1996 that also states that principals are responsible for professional management of the school. For principals teaching multi grade classes, their case is different, since time allocated is shared amongst those multiple grades s/he teachers. Therefore, this study hopes to contribute to the knowledge regarding policy formulation particularly for schools which practise multi-grade teaching. The school with low enrolment figure might look small in terms of size but it has some complications when it comes to the ways in which teaching and learning takes place. If the SASA places professional management of

schools on the shoulders of the principals, again the study hopes to contribute towards understanding the challenges faced by these principals who teach multi-grade classes. This study hopes to provide the Department of Education with the real life experience in terms of leadership and management in these schools. Strategies utilized by principals in this study can be of benefit to other principals in South Africa who are entangled in a similar situation. Should the study reveal that there are gaps that need to be filled because of the situation, necessary intervention can then be taken based on the findings. Through this study, I hope that the Department of Education can be alerted to consider these principals' specific needs when they draw up their plans of meetings and professional development workshops due to the fact that currently similar plans and programmes are in place. There are no special provisions made for teachers and principals engaged in multi-grade teaching. This study can assist the provincial department to cater for these school's needs accordingly considering their circumstances.

### ***1.9.Key words in the study***

**Multi-grade:** It is used to refer to the condition where two or more grades are combined under one roof and taught by one teacher.

**Multi-grade school:** It is used to refer to the school where multi-grade teaching is exercised. Even though it is the classes that are multi-grade but the concept also ends up being used to refer to the school with this teaching and learning approach.

**Principal:** This is the term used to refer to the head or manager of the school. In other parts of the study, where I cite studies conducted in other countries, the word like headteacher is used to refer to principals.

**Principal-cum teacher:** This is the term used to refer to the principals of schools in this study who were also involved in teaching multi-grade classes in schools. In the analysis chapters this concept principal-cum teacher is used frequently with the word „principal“. I call them with this

name because even though in this study I refer to them as principal-cum teachers, their official title is „Principal“.

Practice: In this study practice is used to refer to what the principal-cum teachers do in schools.

### ***1.10. A brief tour guide to this thesis***

Chapter one of this thesis serves as an introduction and gives background of the study. It also provides insight into the purpose of the study, the rationale behind it as well as its focus.

Chapter two provides the literature review of this thesis. This is where different scholars that have had an insight to this field are taken into consideration.

Chapter three of this thesis contains the theoretical framework on which the study is aligned.

Chapter four explains methodology that was employed to generate data during the entire study.

Chapter five focuses on the first research question where I explore the principal-cum teachers’ experiences of managing multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools.

Chapter six focuses on the second research question. The focus is given on how the principal-cum teachers sought to manage their roles in the context of multi-grade schools.

Chapter seven presents the lessons that can be learnt from this study, conclusions and recommendations of the study.



### ***1.11. Conclusion***

This chapter has presented the introduction to this thesis. To develop understanding, it has given some background to this study whereby different policies have been discussed to look at the position of the principal in the school environment. The statements of purpose and problem have been discussed and practice of principal-cum teachers in multi-grade schools has been discussed. Research aims and research questions has also been presented. Personal experiences have been shared as part of the rationale for this study. It then presented the significance of the study. Finally, key concepts have been explained and it has given a tour guide of the entire thesis to the reader. The next section discusses the literature reviewed in this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *2.1.Introduction*

This chapter is about the literature reviewed to establish the basis of the study. In this chapter I begin by examining the concepts of education management and education leadership and further explores the relationship between the two in the life of an institution. This literature is very important because the teachers that participated in this study are engaged in leadership and management in the schools and they are also engaged in handling multi-grade classes as class teachers and subject teachers. I then look at the significance of organizational culture. From there I move to examine the roles of school principals in different contexts or in different countries of the world. I then continue by focusing on small schools and their features which is then followed by challenges of small schools and challenges of principals of small schools. After that, I explore multi-grade teaching which is what the principals under this study were engaged in. I then move on to discuss about complexity of school management in small schools and emotions that principals of small schools have in their practice. The principals engaged in teaching multi-grade classes implement curriculum in their classes; hence in this chapter, the school curriculum is also considered to develop understanding of what the principals are engaged in.

The purpose of the next section is to develop the readers' understanding of education management and leadership in the education institution. I also try to locate the two concepts in the broader field of education and also try to create their link with between them and the practice of the principals under investigation.

#### *2.2.What is education management?*

Management is a task that involves a variety of activities to ensure smooth running of the school. The institutional effectiveness depends on the management style that the managers in the school employ. Sound management is an essential aspect of the institution but its central goal is the

promotion of effective teaching and learning in schools (Task Team Report, 1996). The responsibility of management is to create and support conditions necessary for teachers and learners to work. Management in the school ensures that the organization is run most effectively and efficiently to achieve its purpose. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) argue that school managers hold school, build confidence and security therein. In the school environment this job is performed by formal leaders that compose the SMT.

Management involves a series of tasks such as whole school management, decision making, delegating, problem solving, policy formulation and planning (Sindhrajh, 2007). These management activities identified by Sindhrajh are similar to activities identified by (Collarbone & Billingham, 1998; Maxwell, 2002). They all agree that a manager ensures that the organization runs smoothly by fulfilling the functions of controlling, staffing, budgeting, organising and problem solving. Van der Westhuizen (2002) shares the same sentiment in this matter and he states that management is generic actions which form a continuous cycle of activities in order to reach previously set goals. It is the responsibility of the principal as the head of the institution to see to it that duties are executed appropriately. The management activities are performed in many components of the school that includes learners, physical facilities, school finance, administration staff, non-teaching staff and even the school community. Therefore, the principal has a huge task of ensuring that all these areas in the institution are managed effectively for the whole school benefit.

Different scholars define the concept management in various ways and all the definitions used encapsulate a number of management roles that managers play. McFarland (1974) defines management as crosses through which human effort is directed and co-ordinated. The definition by McFarland correlates with the view by Morgan (1976) where he claims that management is getting things done through and with people. Trewatha and Newport (1976) define management as the process of actuating, organising, planning and controlling an organisation's operations in order to achieve a co-ordination of material and human resources necessary to effectively and efficiently attain goals. Whereas Kolde (1977, p. 39) claims that "management may be defined

as the process of activating and integrating the capacities of an enterprise to attain optimum results with a minimum expenditure of resources". All these definitions promulgate some of the key roles that the manager has to pay attention to in his/her management in the organisation. This study then intended to explore the mile that the school principals went towards performing these activities in the life of the schools in the context of multi-grade schools. Therefore, in education management and in the school environment, the principal performs all the roles assigned to him/her adhering to the policies in place. This is done in order to achieve efficient school results in line with prescribed policies. The main purpose of management job is to attain optimum results for the organisation.

Looking at the above definitions by different scholars I then associate them with a number of actions which Van Der Westhuizen (2002) believes the manager embarks on in the organisation. According to Van Der Westhuizen (2002) managers utilize the necessary people, material and means as effectively as possible in order to achieve certain aims. This involves one of the emphases that he made where he states that management is a decision making process. In order for the school manager to select suitable people and the material that s/he requires, s/he has to be good in decision making so that s/he gives the right task to the right person. This concerns how people are led to do that what has to be done. It also involves making the right decisions so that goals can be achieved effectively through certain actions. This resonates with what De Wet (1981) states when referring to management, he states that it is the social process in which the manager coordinates the tasks of a group of people by means of performing all the management roles in order to achieve specific goals of an organisation.

According to Van der Westhuizen (2002), co-ordination is one of the core of management actions that the manager plays in the school. He cites that there should be continual reconciliation between the conflicting interests in a school to facilitate the achievement of goals through the co-ordination of diverse tasks. This is in line with the definition of management by Mahoney (1961): to define management, he states that it is the unification and the co-ordination of activities of both individuals and groups. In addition to this, Reynders (1977) further adds two

actions which are linked to co-ordination; he adds leading and guiding as core of management. He states that management as leading and guiding are activities which ignite personnel in such a way that they actively work and put their best endeavour to achieve organisational goals. The study conducted then intended to explore the experience of principal-cum teachers of leading and guiding in multi-grade schools.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education runs a programme known as the Principals Management Development Programme (PMDP). The programme is meant for quality enhancement in leadership and management by school principals. PMDP (2011) stipulates a number of activities that the principal as the head of the institution performs. Principals have to take a lead in people management, resources acquisition, strategic planning, curriculum management, asset management, infrastructure management etc. The principal as the head of institution cannot carry all these roles solely, therefore s/he has to delegate some duties to other members of the staff which can be other members of the SMT or any other member of the staff that has got relevant expertise. This calls for the education manager to have a clear understanding of the people that s/he manages in the organization. This will assist him/her to delegate the right task to the right person.

### ***2.3. What is leadership?***

There is no simple and straight forward definition for the concept leadership. The only way of developing understanding for the concept is considering the activities involved. According to Starrat, (1993); Davidoff and Lazarus, (1997); Morrison, (1998) and Fullan, (2003) leadership has to do with visioning, strategizing, creating a direction and transforming the organisation. Bush and Clover (2003, p. 10) contends that “Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purpose. It involves inspiring and supporting others towards the achievement of the vision of the organisation, which is based on clear and professional values”. In addition to this, Kotter (1996, p. 25) claims that “Leadership is a set of processes that creates organizations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances”. The

principal of the school is the one that ensures that this becomes a reality in the institution that s/he manages.

In an organization, leadership is aligned to effectiveness and it is about doing the right things in the institution. When leadership is exercised in the institution, the leader acts as a driving force by ensuring that the values and learning processes are brought to the organization. According to Collarbone and Billingham, (1998); Maxwell, (2002) the educational leader is a mentor, role model, coach who influences/ inspires followers to develop and to realise the organisation's vision. This elicits the importance of the role to be played by people in leadership in the organisation. Those who lead must be good role models modelling good behaviour and positive characteristics to the led group. In a school environment, there is formal leadership. This is the structure that is known as the SMT consisting of position holders remunerated for their positions as mentioned earlier. According to Davidoff and Lazarus, (1997) the SMT gives a sense of direction and it ensures that the school moves forward and is not stuck in a rut or become stale and reactive. Therefore, it calls for the Principal, Deputy Principal and HOD to have a deep understanding of the school plans and policies so that they are able to lead the led to the right direction for institutional effectiveness. In contrast of formal leadership there is informal leadership which is a form of leadership which encourages anyone in the organization to engage himself or herself in leadership roles in the institution (Harris and Muijs, 2005). To develop understanding of informal leadership as opposed to formal leadership, I need to cite Frost and Durrant, (2000) who unveil that in informal leadership it is not just delegation, direction or distribution of responsibilities but it is about normal teachers engaging themselves in innovating and sustaining change in the workplace. In this study, the focus is on principals of schools who hold formal leadership positions in the schools that they manage. Therefore, all the roles that they are engaged in is not by delegation or distributed to them by senior managers but played as a result of their job description.

#### ***2.4. The interconnectedness of management and leadership***

The literature on management and leadership reveals that these are the two roles that are consequential in a school environment. In order for the organization to run smoothly, there is a need for effective management and pure, healthy leadership. For the principal to be a good principal, s/he has to possess the characteristics of both leader and manager. Bennis cited in Gerber et al., (1998) identifies a number of clarifications to distinguish between the leader and the manager.

Bennis (1965) cites that managers administer the given roles to them but the leaders take a different level and become innovative. The study that was conducted explored to what extent were the principal-cum teachers able to design new ideas and implement them in their practice. The leaders have long term views; they look forward to the future of the institution they manage and plan towards taking the institution to a next higher level. Bennis further states that when leaders are given the task to do, they ask what to do and they always request for justification as to why should that be done in that manner. From what they understand they are able to inspire those that are led to such an extent that they strive for the betterment of the institution. In that manner the leaders are able to originate their own activities and contribute towards the culture of the school. Leaders always look for what is best for their school and they always challenge what is not right for their schools. These are the roles that form part of the roles of the daily principals' job and the mile that the principal-cum teachers go to engage themselves in these roles is then taken care of. Considering the above clarifications, one realizes that both the concepts are significant in the creation of a school that is a healthy organisation. Leadership is considered as the aspect of management which is characterised by charismatic individuals with visionary flair and capabilities to motivate, influence and inspire others in the institution. This is a sign that the two cannot be separated from each other in the institution. Sindhrajh, (2007, p. 33) cite that the "difference between leadership and management is that leadership relates to mission, direction and inspiration whilst management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done and working effectively with people".

This section has discussed leadership and management and the characteristics that are involved in each. The connectivity between the two concepts has been dealt with and it has been realized that the two are intertwined. These two activities are performed in a school environment which has its own style of doing things which forms its cultural grounds. In the next section I present the literature on culture in an organization.

### ***2.5. The significance of organizational culture.***

Culture is about the state of things in an organisation (Stoll and Fink, 1996). They further claim that it is observed behavioural regularities, including language and rituals, norms that evolve in working groups, dominant values expounded by an organization, philosophy that guides an organization and the feeling or climate conveyed in an organization. The preceding definition elicits some key characteristics or element which determine a particular culture for an organisation. Amongst things that are stated are behavioural patterns of individuals within the organisation and the ways they perform the roles assigned to them. Furthermore, emphasis is given to the language and rituals that are used in that particular group or community. In this study, I then intended to understand the culture that prevailed in schools due to the sizes of schools and number of personnel employed. It was important for me to explore how they experienced working within this culture.

Rosenholtz's (1989), talks of four expressions of school culture. In this book she argues that social organization of school directly affects the commitment of teachers and the achievement of learners. In addition, she also talks about two stereotypical schools which she refers to as moving and stuck schools. In each category of these schools, she spells out a number of characteristics. Under stuck schools she says there is low consensus, teacher uncertainty, low commitment, isolation, individualized and learning impoverished. Whereas in a moving school, there is high consensus, teacher certainty, high commitment, cohesiveness, collaborative and learning enriched. What drives the school to each of these categories is the culture practised in the school and how people behave themselves in their practice. This is what I wanted to explore in the context of multi-grade schools with regard to leadership and management of these schools. This



was based on the claim made by Deal and Kennedy (1983) as cited in Stoll and Fink (1996) where they state that when culture works against you, it is nearly impossible to get anything done.

Hargreaves, (1994a) as cited in Stoll and Fink (1996) lists four teacher subcultures in a school environment. The four subcultures are individualism, collaboration, contrived collegiality and balkanization. Two subcultures that I focus on are collegiality and contrived collegiality. In collegiality, teachers voluntarily choose to work collectively without being given external mandate. They share ideas and materials and do all their activities together. In contrast, in contrived collegiality, collaborative working relationships are compulsorily imposed by administrators. By exploring this I would be able to learn how the principal-cum teachers experienced working with other people in a multi-grade school culture consisting of limited human resources.

The next section focuses on the roles that are attached to the position of a school principal. These roles contain the elements of both the concepts that have been discussed in this section.

### ***2.6.Exploring the roles of school principals globally.***

The school is managed by a structure composed by formal leaders. This group of formal leaders ensures that the school is managed according to the policies and regulations as prescribed. At the apex of this leadership structure is the school principal who is the premier accounting officer in the organisation. It is for those reasons that the principal has got many critical roles to play in a school environment to ensure that everything runs smoothly for the benefit of the school. In South Africa, the roles of the principal in the school environment are clearly spelt out in the EEA. The act begins by mentioning two clear aims of the principal job. It states that the first aim is to ensure that the school is managed professionally and in compliance with applicable personnel administrative measures, regulations and legislations prescribed. The second aim is to ensure the promotion of learning consistent with existing policies. These two aims give emphasis

on quality assurance from the side of the principal to ensure that everyone in the school complies with the applicable policies. In addition to this, Barth (1988) also contends that the principal plays a very significant role in the school. He cites that the head is the leading professional, leading by example or by gentle touches of the wheel, to one where the head is a proactive manager who builds a positive, achieving whole-school culture that permeates the classroom and supports the teaching and learning going on within it. In the school, the principal has a number of tasks that s/he has to perform in order for the school to become effective. This is in line with what Swartz (1979) states about the principal in the school: he states that in the hierarchy of leadership positions, the principal traditionally holds the exceptional position of “master of masters” and “leader of leaders”. In addition to this Van Der Westhuizen (2002, p. 3) also adds and claim that “the effective functioning of a school greatly depends on the professional conduct of the school principal and the leadership and management roles he fulfils”.

According to Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2009) the central role of the principal is to provide clear management and leadership in all zones of the educational institution to enable the development and support of condition under which high quality teaching and learning take place. This purpose mentioned highlights that there are a number of activities involved in order for the school to provide quality teaching and learning. Hence, the next section focuses on different roles that the principal performs in a school environment.

### *2.6.1. Principal's administrative role*

In the South African context, the EEA contemplates that one of the major roles that the school principal performs is administration. Within this role there are sub-roles that the principal as the head of the institution is expected to play. Some of administration roles that the principal has to play are to guide programmes and allocation of learners into classes. It is the responsibility of the principal to give proper instructions in the school; it means s/he is expected to be very clear with all the tasks that s/he has to give instructions for. This is very important because if s/he is not clear, there are great opportunities for him/her to mislead the people that s/he leads by giving them wrong instructions. The principal plays a very crucial role in the appointment of staff members in the school that s/he manages. During the interviews for Post Level One (P L 1)

educators, HOD and Deputy Principal (DP), the principal plays a very crucial role of being the resource person. S/he plays a major role of assisting the interview committee to perform its function of shortlisting and conducting interviews successfully. After the appointments have been finalized, the principal is the one who must also ensure that there are orientation and induction programmes for newly appointed staff members in place in the institution that s/he manages. S/he is expected to conduct inductions or delegate that role to other personnel in the school.

The principal takes a lead with regard to developing the school strategic plan. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA), 27 of 1998 enshrines the importance of plans and internal policies in order for the school to function effectively. The policies serve as a guideline of what procedures are to be followed in the school when certain activities are done. The person that has to take a lead to make sure that policies are available in the school is the principal. S/he has to give guidance during the policy formulation process. For example, each school is expected to have its own Language Policy that will guide it in terms of language preferences internally. Therefore, the principal has to make sure that the Language policy is in place in the school. The policy has to be formulated collectively and with the involvement of all the stakeholders. Policies contribute a big part towards strategic planning for the school but the principal is the key person that should orchestrate their formulation process. Another important aspect of the strategic plan is the school plans. The school cannot function without plans like School Development Plan (SDP); School Improvement Plan (SIP); Discipline, Safety and Security Plan (DSSP); Annual National Assessment Improvement Plan (ANAIP), Infrastructure Improvement Plan (IIP) etc. The availability of these plans as part of the strategic plan in the school lies on the shoulders of the principal. The principal has to make sure that these plans are in place in the institution that s/he leads and should make sure that all stakeholders are “married” with those plans. The importance of plans in the life of school has been found to be true in many instances. The study that was conducted by Jones (1999a) in Welsh Valley in South Wales on primary headteachers indicates that the principals believed that planning was important part of their work.

The EEA stipulates that the principal is expected to ensure that a school log book containing a record of all important events in connection with the school is properly maintained. The principal is also expected to forward the incident report to the Department of Education in cases where some irregularities take place in the institution. This is very important because it will protect him/her against being charged for maladministration. This is the role that Jones and Connolly (2000) also identify as one of the key focuses for principals in the school environment. One good example for this is that if burglary happens in the school and some goods are stolen, it is the responsibility of the principal to report that matter to the Department of Education so that it stays informed about the incident or about loss of goods purchased with money allocated to the school.

In the school, the principal handles school funds that the Department of Education gives to the school for purchasing and paying for its daily needs. According to EEA and SASA, South African principals have to make sure that finance is handled in a proper and effective way as per the contemplations of the PFMA. The EEA explicitly states that part of the principal's job is to have various kinds of school accounts and records properly kept and to make the best use of funds for the benefit of learners in consultation with the appropriate structures. The study that was conducted by Jones (1999a) reveals that principals themselves believe that finance management is one of the key activities in the school. In this study, principals were also responsible for this crucial role of managing finances. Although their exposure is the same but there is going to be a difference in amounts of money allocated to their schools due to the policy followed to fund schools in South Africa. From this study it was also taken into consideration as to how these principals experienced financial management in the context of small multi-grade schools.

#### *2.6.2. Human resource roles*

The principal has a number of roles in this category that are assigned to him/her because of his position. The EEA contemplates that the principal guides, supervises and offer professional direction and advice to personnel employed in the institution. In the institution, the principal works with people at various levels. Therefore, the principal is the main person who should

distribute duty loads in an equitable manner (EEA). This is done in a way that everyone that is concerned is satisfied because if there is one party that is not satisfied conflict might arise.

Another key role that the principal plays in this category is staff development management. A school cannot be effective without the programmes of staff development. Lumby (2003) offers an advice in as far as staff development is concerned; he states that staff development should be devised in a way that it matches the needs and circumstances and should be implemented with the appropriate tool. Through staff development, staff members acquire new ideas, develop new attitudes, knowledge and skills. Eden (2001) categorises the functions of principals into different categories and he refer to this function as pedagogical function of the principal. For her this is the very significant role where a principal works directly with the teachers to assist them to develop professionally.

The principal is also expected to manage the teachers' performance in the school that s/he manages. This is very important because should it not be done in a right way things can go off direction. Wildly and Loudon (2000, p. 178) explain the process of teachers managing teachers' performance in this way, "the system requires the principal to manage teachers' performance by setting up processes through which they account to the principal for their classroom performance". The principal has to ensure that s/he understands what is happening in the classrooms in his/her school. This includes crucial issues like teaching and learning, behaviour of human resources in those classrooms, clear understanding of the welfare of learners in those classrooms etc.

The Department of Basic Education in South Africa has Collective Agreement 8 of 2003 which encapsulates the content and processes of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in schools. IQMS is the process in which teachers' performance is evaluated. The process takes place in the form of assessment standards with different criterion in each. For a Post Level one teacher, the first four assessment standards focus on the teacher in the classroom and the other three focus on the teacher beyond the classroom. After the whole process of evaluation has been completed the School Development Team (SDT) gets together to draft the school development

plan. The principal is the key person who should drive the whole process so that at the end the school can have a School Improvement Plan (SIP). Staff development programmes are informed by the school improvement plan. The IQMS programme is a programme that enhance co-operation and informed decision making at school because the entire process is discussed and decisions are taken collectively. The principal has to make sure that the process is conducted as per the agreement reached through Collective Agreement 8 of 2003. S/he also has to make ensure that the process takes place smoothly in the school that s/he manages. In this study, principals manage schools which are very small and they are the sole members of SMT; they find themselves having to drive this process as managers of schools and as multi-grade class teachers. There is no way they can avoid this because it is compulsory. It is one of their areas of management where their performance is assessed as heads of institutions.

### *2.6.3. Curriculum management*

The premier function of the school is teaching and learning. Teaching and learning involves curriculum. Therefore, if teaching and learning is the principal function in the school, it has to be managed. Chaplain (2001, p. 206) explains the process of curriculum management as improving the curricular experience for pupils and providing them with a solid base”. The principal is the key person who should ensure that there are systems in place for curriculum management and curriculum tracking (PMDP, 2012). S/he plays this role with the assistance of the HODs in the school as curriculum specialists. There are many areas that are to be taken into consideration in as far as the curriculum is concerned in the school. Therefore s/he has to ensure that s/he works closely with the HODs in curriculum management and ensure that all areas are well covered.

The principal is not always directly involved in curriculum management but it is the HODs that are always directly involved in the curriculum. However, because the delivery of the curriculum is the core business of the school, the principal must ultimately account for all the decisions taken. The South African Standards for Principalship (2003) spells out that principals have a responsibility which includes managing the curriculum and its implementation. S/he is the one that has to see to it how the curriculum is implemented and looks at the results that the school

achieves. Barth (1988) claims that principals have a role of setting curriculum expectations, and ensure that it is monitored and evaluates the achievement of learning outcomes. Therefore, the principal must oversee the management and implementation of the curriculum and be satisfied that it is done correctly (KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Principals Management Development Programme (PMDP, Handbook, 2011). In practice, the principal is expected to have a good understanding of policy documentation which impacts on curriculum management and delivery. S/he is expected to monitor progress in the management and implementation of the curriculum on a regular basis. S/he has also to keep in constant with what is happening at the education /learner interface (PMDP, 2011). When I consider all the roles that the principal plays in the curriculum management in the school, it makes it clear that s/he is fully involved in the curriculum matters in the school.

In a study that was conducted by Bush and Glover (2009) on the different roles that the principals played in the school, it was evident that the principals played a very important role in curriculum management in schools. It was discovered that principals oversee the curriculum across the school, ensure that the lessons take place, monitor the work of the HoDs by scrutiny of work plans and portfolios, arrange programmes of class visits followed by feedback to educators and ensuring availability of appropriate learning and teaching support materials. The principals that were involved in that study were principals whose schools had HoDs as members of the SMT who also played their role in the curriculum management. In this study, the principals are the only members of the SMT and they play all the roles by themselves. Therefore it was important to explore how principals in this situation managed in their practice to make sure that everything ran smoothly around curriculum implementation as the core business of the school.

#### *2.6.4. Extra- and co-curricular roles of the principal*

Principals play a vital role in the recruitment and promotion of teachers in the institution (EEA). In the recruitment process the principal as the head of the institution has to ensure that the process runs smoothly and fairly. Lumby (1993) suggests that there are three underlying issues which need to be addressed in the management of selection process. The three issues are

acknowledgement the technicalities of the roles, the importance of being objective in an otherwise subjective situation and the issue of equal opportunities. Each of these issues is also relevant in the context of South Africa. Therefore, the principal as the head of the institution has to make sure that these issues do not influence the processes of staff recruitment and promotion in the school that the principal manages. Principals have to ensure that the shortlisting and interviewing process run fairly in the organisation that s/he manages. S/he is the one that minimizes irregularities in the staffing processes.

In this category of roles that the principal plays in the school, there are other emerging responsibilities that the principal has to play. Barth (1988) claims that the responsibilities of the principal in this category include community extension and pastoral roles, infrastructure management and grief counselling. He further adds that increasingly, the principal interacts with other social challenges like social ills, economic disadvantage and access to products and services and this requires school leaders to actively engage with the complexity of schools within their communities. This extends the areas of performance for principals of schools and binds them to stretch their arms to reach all the parts of the area to ensure minimal performance. In a similar vein, Collective Agreement 8 of 2003, in the context of South Africa, in the IQMS process, contains a number of performance standards. Some of the assessment standards look at how the teacher engages himself/herself in matters related to social well being of the learners as well as her/his colleagues. This is a sign that this area has become very important in the practice of the teacher in the school environment so the teachers have to try by all means to reach these areas where these roles are performed. Principals in the study as principals in the South African context also have to go through this process and through this study it would also be learnt how they experienced this in the context of multi-grade schools.

#### *2.6.5. Interaction with stakeholders*

In a school environment, the principal is involved in interaction with various stakeholders, organisations and other schools. The SASA, 84 of 1996 clearly states that the principal as the head of the institution automatically becomes the member of the School Governing Body (SGB).



S/he then becomes involved in interaction with other members of the SGB. The policy further states that the principal has to provide all necessary support and guidelines to the SGB in the performance of its roles in terms of SASA. The EEA further suggests that the principal participates in school community functions related to educational issues and community building. This resonates very well with the idea of extended professionals in the school environment (Hoyle, 1980). What Hoyle (1980) advocates is that teachers need not only focus on the school for their practice but they should go beyond that and extend their services to the community that they serve. Similarly, in this study, the principals perform similar roles in this category. To them this role together with other roles is coupled with multi-grade teaching.

This section looked at the roles of the school principal which s/he has to play in the life of the school as an educational organization. Principals that were under study were principals that were working in small schools. Hence, the next section looks closely to the small schools. The purpose is to portray a picture of what happens in small schools which further results in multi-grade teaching by school principals.

### ***2.7. Towards understanding small schools***

A small school is a school where there are very few learners and as a result it also has few teachers (Lumby and Azaola, 2011). In these schools learner numbers are very low and some have less than fifty learners. In the South African context the teaching staff figures are determined by total number of learner enrolment in the school. In some instances, in other schools the Post Provisioning Norms (PPN), which is the norm for determining the number of teachers in schools, allows the school to only have one teacher. This teacher performs all the roles of the classroom-based teacher and roles of the principal. In a case where there are two teachers, one of the teachers is the school principal that has to perform all the duties and responsibilities of the head of the institution as well as teaching the mixed age class and this is the practice of principals in this study. The important part about these schools is that, it happens that some of them offer the full cycle of a primary school, which is Grade R to Grade 7. The numbers of both learners and teachers in these schools bind the teachers to be engaged in multi-

grade teaching. It rests on the teachers involved to decide on how they distribute the classes amongst themselves. As a result, the principals end up enmeshed in teaching multi-grade classes in these schools and simultaneously expected to offer directive school leadership. The big concern is: Are these principals involved in this situation able to balance their classroom roles and their roles of leading the institutions?

The issue of small schools is an issue that prevails globally. In Australia, small schools have played a very important role in the provision of schooling (Halsey, 2011). In the Australian context, an enrolment of 200 or less is used to determine the school as a small school. Halsey (2011) claims that based on the data collected in 2008, there were 2 500 schools that had an enrolment of 100 or fewer learners. He further states that if 200 enrolments or fewer is used as the definition of small schools, it means that in Australia they have 4 253 schools falling under this category. The claim that he made is that by definition, small schools are a prominent feature of education in Australia, particularly in rural and remote Australia, and therefore this warrants consideration for them.

In Scotland, the Scottish Council for Research in Education commissioned by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department in 1996 conducted a study on small schools and they wanted to study to how they managed change. Findings for that study are presented by Wilson and McPake (2000). Wilson and McPake (2000, p. 119) have this definition of a small school: “a small school is defined as one with under 120 pupils and therefore, the headteacher usually has a substantial teaching commitment”. Their definition of a small school correlates to the description of the small school that has been laid in the preceding paragraph. What the two researchers state is that these schools are located predominantly in island and rural parts of Scotland. This is fascinating because in the South African context it is the same situation; most of the schools with low enrolment figures are found in rural areas.

In South Africa, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, where this study was conducted, all the schools that have an enrolment of 200 and below are regarded as small schools. According to the discussion document on the TSS in KwaZulu-Natal (2012), small schools were declared as non-viable schools. These schools include all the schools with an enrolment below 200 and all multi-grade schools. According to Education Management Information System (EMIS, 2012) statistics, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education had 1372 small and non-viable schools. These schools were across the twelve education districts in the province. Table 2.1 presents schools with enrolment below 200 in KwaZulu-Natal province.

Schools with learner enrolment less than 200 as per school types

DISTRICT	COMBINED	SECONDARY	PRIMARY	TOTAL	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	TOTAL
Amajuba	23	01	42	66	62	04	66
Ilembe	06	18	100	124	123	01	124
Pinetown	06	06	35	47	35	12	47
Sisonke	21	14	124	159	158	01	159
Ugu	09	32	98	139	134	05	139
Umgungundlovu	25	18	124	167	151	16	167
Umkhanyakude	01	11	79	91	87	04	91
Umlazi	11	08	25	44	26	18	44
Umzinyathi	11	08	97	116	114	02	116
Uthukela	22	16	69	107	99	08	107
Uthungulu	06	17	95	118	110	08	118
Zululand	25	17	152	194	188	06	194
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>1040</b>	<b>1372</b>	<b>1287</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>1372</b>

Table 2.1: Statistics according to the discussion document on the Transformation of the Schooling System in KwaZulu-Natal: 2012

The statistics provided in this table provide a clear picture of the distribution of small schools in the province of where the study was conducted. The statistics in the table portrays a picture that the issue of small schools affects all the twelve districts in the province. However, the data shows that in rural districts the number of small schools is higher than the number of small schools in urban districts. It also shows that across the twelve districts in the province, the number of small primary schools is higher than the number of small secondary schools.

### ***2.7.1. What are the challenges of small schools?***

In the context of small schools, there are quite a number of challenges that these schools face. There are challenges that affect the schools in their core function, which is teaching and learning and there are also some challenges that have to do with the management of the school. In this section I present those challenges.

#### *2.7.1.1. Low numbers of staff*

The small schools normally have low numbers of staff allocated to them. Amongst them there are also one teacher schools. The situation of an institution having a low number of staff makes the delegation of responsibilities much more difficult (Wilson & McPake, 2000). In larger schools, there are roles that are delegated to other members of the management team or other staff members. However, in small schools this is impossible due to the numbers of staff members available; headteachers deal with management duties personally and also involve themselves a lot in other duties. In the study that was conducted in Scotland, the principals maintained that they were sole members of the SMT, there were not enough hands to distribute roles to and in their schools the processes took very long. Wilson and McPake (2000) argue that roles that principals play in small schools may range from development planning, designing the school programmes, teaching in the classrooms, unblocking drains and the other. Having mentioned earlier before that delegation is difficult in these schools, it therefore calls for the headteacher to particularly adapt at prioritizing and time management in order for him or her to be able to stretch his/ her arms to all areas where s/he is needed as a sole member of the SMT.

According to the Discussion document on the TSS in KwaZulu-Natal (2012) one of the implications of small schools is low PPN, leading to multi-grade teaching. In a number of studies that have been conducted by Lumby and Azaola (2011); Ngubane (2011); Gomes (2013); Du Plessis and Subramanien (2014) and Blease (2014) in South Africa, the issue of low enrolment figures in schools under studies has always been the key issue. The 2009 national learner to educator ratio was 30: 1 (Department of Education, 2010). In the context of Australia the learner to educator ratio was 14:1 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The learner to teacher ratio in Australia gives more teachers as compared to the South African context. A typical example in the study by Lumby and Azaola was one of the schools where they studied its principal. The school had 106 learners and because of this figure it only qualified to have 3 teachers. However, the school offered a full cycle of the primary school which is Grade R to Grade 7. The three teachers were responsible for all the grades. One of these teachers in this school was the principal of the school.

#### **2.7.1.2.**        *Lack of orientation and induction of principals in small schools*

The literature reveals that managing the small school is not an easy task to perform. It therefore calls for the concerned Departments of Education, District offices to organize induction seminars for newly appointed principals of small schools. Clark and Wildy (2011) cite that in Western Australia there is no formal or specific preparation for principalship. They further state that inductions are organized for principals at the district office three to four weeks after they have taken up their appointment. These inductions are normally held over three days. The induction programme is normally inadequate: it focuses mainly on technical matters, such as financial management, duty of care, and occupational health and safety (Clark & Wildy, 2011). While very little that the newly appointed principal can grasp in the period of three days, it is even worse for a person that has additional needs like skills of leading and managing the school and also handling a multi-grade class. Systems for induction and orientation to these teachers should be speaking directly to their special case.

### 2.7.1.3. *Time constraints on principals*

The study conducted on small schools by researchers from the Scottish Council for Research in Education indicates that lack of time was perceived as a negative issue by many principals. The findings indicate that principals who teach for four or four and a half days a week have less time than their non-teaching colleagues. These principals who spend much of their time teaching in classrooms have very less time to perform their administrative roles. In South Africa, the EEA 78 of 1998 states that a principal teaches between 10 and 92% of his time in the school depending to the need of the school. What determines the percentage of time that the principal teaches are the curricular needs of the school where the principal serves. In small schools, conditions are odd and they bind principals to go beyond that stipulated time when teaching multi-grade classes.

The nature of the principal's job in small schools is shaped by the size and nature of the school. It is the size that determines that principals have also to engage themselves in multi-grade classes. In the study that was conducted in South Africa by Lumby and Azaola (2011) on women principals in small schools, one female principal taught from Grade 1 to Grade 3. She was responsible for all the subjects in the Foundation Phase in the three grades. This is bit challenging and she also admitted that the support that she got was minimal. The person that was responsible for them was the farm manager and she handled all the correspondences that they had with him before matters could be referred to the district office. This is a bit fascinating because I am surprised as to how informative the farm manager can be on educational issues. This is an indication that in small schools, particularly those in farms, there can be a lot that can go on unprofessionally.

### 2.7.1.4. *Threat of closure*

Schools with low enrolment figures are often under the threat of closure (Halsey, 2011). He further states that many of these schools have been closed. This is the situation and the threats that the small schools are always faced with universally where small schools exist. In 2012, the

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDOE) collected statistics of all those small schools. The focus was given on all those schools with the enrolment of 200 and less. The term that the KZNDOE used was that these schools are “non-viable schools”. The major concern about this is that if the Education Department says these schools are none viable, they are facing closure in future and the staff members employed will have to move to other schools where they will be placed. This is an indication that people working in this environment are always working under threat of institutional closure and always surrounded by uncertainty of their future in their career and this impacts negatively to their performance and service delivery.

The situation of threat of closure surrounding small schools is the situation that prevails in all places where small schools exist. The similar condition prevails in the study that was conducted by Karlberg-Granlund (2011). The study that she conducted focused in Finland which is an area where more than 100 small schools have been closed due to small enrolment figures. The findings reveal that teachers working in small rural schools are always surrounded by uncertainties and continually threatened with closure. This is what the two writers say about the situation of working in small schools: “the uncertain future and ongoing debates about the economic and educational advantages and disadvantages of small schools might be a great threat for teachers” professional development, identity and self-confidence, as well as hindrance for educational planning and school improvement” (Korpinen, 1998; Solstad, 2009 in Karlberg-Granlund, 2011). This is the situation that impacts negatively on teachers that function under this situation. Teachers in this situation sometimes find themselves in a demotivating situation because they are not sure of what the future carries for them and their schools. This situation contributes negatively to their confidence and their morale as teachers and it makes it very difficult for them to engage in long term planning for their schools through the threat of closure for the institutions that they manage.

#### 2.7.1.5. *Socio-economic status of the school community*

Most of the schools that have low enrolment figures are found in rural and remote areas. As a result most of these schools find it difficult to allocate adequate physical resources for

themselves. It calls for the principal in this situation to have a clear understanding of the entire community where s/he manages. In the study that was conducted by Anderson and White (2011) on challenges that small schools face to acquire resources, the schools' demographic data showed that a community was suffering financial hardships and the schools had to intervene to ensure that the community met the basic needs of life. In this study, the data indicated that one in three people in the community volunteered for an organization or to care for others in the community. This is very important for teachers to understand because it helps them to design their plans knowing exactly the community's affordability. This is in line with what Wink (2005) encourages about teachers as practitioners in schools. She emphasizes on critical literacy in schools from teachers. Critical literacy allows teachers to understand the word and world that surround the community that they serve. When teachers know exactly the community's needs, they then need to have a strong social commitment.

#### *2.7.1.6. Challenged teaching and learning processes*

The dominant characteristic of small schools is that there is small number of people within. However, the fact that the numbers are small does not mean that there will be changes in the way teaching and learning takes place. Galton and Patrick (1993) argue that small schools are significantly not different from larger schools, particularly in the subject content of their curriculum and in the manner of teaching employed. The point made here is that the fact that there are small numbers of teachers in these schools and they are committed in teaching multi-grade does not mean that there is a change in the number of subjects that each grade offers. In addition to this, other classroom related functions like learners' work assessment have to be done accordingly and authentically as they are done in larger schools to maintain the standards. The only difference in place is that in larger schools there is adequate human resource, which is teachers, that will be performing this role. In contrast, in small schools, it is a different situation because teachers who work there have to teach many subjects in different grades in their schools and also perform all the other classroom related activities. Amongst these teachers, we also find the principal being part of full-time teaching multi-grade classes which is exactly what principals were engaged in in this study.



The predominance of teaching over management by principals in small schools is likely to mean that these principals' perspective on managing the schools is qualitatively different from their colleagues who manage bigger schools. As much as it can be regarded as overload for these principals to be carrying their overload of teaching, these principals are very conscious of the practical or logistical implications and implementation and also much more up-to-date in their knowledge of the curriculum (Clark & Wildy, 2011). This provides them with opportunities of being curriculum leaders and this makes them to lead by example. One of the roles of the principals as contemplated in the EEA is that principals should monitor teachers' and learners' work in their schools. Therefore, their involvement and understanding of what is happening in classrooms puts them at good chances of monitoring teachers' and learners' work authentically because they have a clearer understanding of what is happening in the classroom. This is very important for them because their schools do not have Heads of Department who would be curriculum specialists and they then play the role of HODs.

However, the amount of time spent in this performance area might also be challenging at some stage. The number of subjects and the grades that each teacher teaches should also be considered and must also be carefully observed on how it impacts to the entire performance of this teacher involved in this case. One of the participants in the study conducted by Lumby and Azaola (2011) in the context of small schools in South Africa said since she was involved in teaching four learning areas in a multi-grade class of three grades, she had to spend 50% of her time studying the curriculum. This is a very crucial part in this performance area because in order for her to deliver to her level best to her learners what she is supposed to deliver she has to understand what is expected of her as a teacher through preparations.

In this study, the focus was on principals of schools engaged in multi-grade teaching and multi-grade teaching has been cited several times in this section. In the next section I briefly discuss multi-grade teaching to develop understanding of this practice.

#### **2.7.1.6.1.      *Multi-grade teaching***

Multi-grade education is widely utilized throughout the world for various reasons in different contexts. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2004) estimates that as many as one-third of all classes throughout the world are multi-grade classes and that multi-grade classes are a routine part of education in many of the world's high-income countries. In addition to this, multi-grade teaching is also used in many developing countries and plays pertinent role in providing access to education for rural communities in many parts of Latin America, Asia and Africa (Little, et al., 2006). In the context of South Africa multi-grade education takes place in almost 27 percent of schools (South African Education Policy Consortium ,SAEPC, 2011:18). Table 2.2 presents the comparisons of the use of multi-grade education amongst developed and developing countries and the status of South Africa with its nine provinces. The percentages given below mean the percentage of schools in the country or province practising multi-grade teaching.

Table 2.2: The use of multi-grade education in developed and developing countries, and in South Africa in percentages.

<b>Developed countries</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Developing countries</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>%</b>
Finland	70	India	84	Eastern Cape	33.5
Netherlands	53	Peru	78	Free State	26.7
Ireland	42	Sri Lanka	63	Gauteng	11.8
Australia	40	Pakistan	58	KwaZulu-Natal	13.3
Sweden	35	Namibia	40	Limpopo	12.8
France	34	Burkina Faso	36	Mpumalanga	25.9
New Zealand	33	South Africa	26	Northern Cape	29.3
England	26	Zambia	26	North West	19.8
Scotland	25			Western Cape	23.5
Canada	20				

Developed countries according to Mulryan-Kyne (2005); Little (2007)

Developing countries according to Little (2007)

South Africa according to Annual School Survey: Report for ordinary schools 2010 and 2011. (2013)

Globally, from the literature conducted on multi-grade teaching, definitions, meanings and terminology used to define multi-grade teaching differs depending to what the concerned groups understand about it. The two forms of practice in schools determine the type of approach to be used to refer to the method employed by the school and the two concepts are monograde and multi-grade. According to Du Plessiss and Subramanien (2014), in a monograde school, learners

are grouped according to grades with a specific teacher assigned to every grade or class within the grade. By contrast, learners in a multi-grade school are not grouped and taught in separate classes - learners of mixed ages, abilities and in different grades are all present at the same time, in the same classroom with one teacher (Little, 2001; Jordaan & Joubert, 2007; Joubert, 2010; Tsolakadis, 2010). Various terms are used to describe this situation in schools. Terms that are used to refer to this situation are „vertical group“, multi-level class, multi-age class, composite class and multi class (Juvane, 2005; Little, 1995). These scholars used these terms to define the situation where more than one class are combined together and simultaneously taught under the same roof by one teacher. To contend with this, in the Annual School Survey for ordinary schools in South Africa for 2010 and 2011 (2013, p. 12), the definition that is used to describe the situation is that “multi-grade class is one in which learners in more than one grade are taught in the same classroom at the same time”.

Multi-grade classes are found mostly in 1-, 2- and 3-teacher schools and most of which are located in rural areas (Mulryan-Kyne, 2004; SAEPC, 2011 and 2010 and 2011 South African Annual School Survey, 2013). There are few studies that have been conducted in South Africa on multi grade teaching as compared to other countries. Brown (2010) indicated that the multi-grade context is an under-researched area in the South African context. However, there is an organisation like Centre for Multi Grade Education (CMGE) that focuses on multi grade education. Some of the work done on multi-grade education comes from scholars like Joubert, (2007); Jordaan (2007); Jordaan (2010); Ngubane, (2011); Gomes, (2013); Du Plessis and Subramanien (2014) and Blease (2014). Ngubane (2011) conducted a study in the context of KwaZulu-Natal and her study focused on Post Level one teachers handling multi-grade classes. Taole and Mncube (2012) also conducted their study and the intention was to explore curriculum differentiation between multi-grade and monograde classes. Gomes (2013) focused on exploring the processes of collective learning and its implementation in their day-to-day use setting. Blease (2014) concentrated on writing practices in two foundation phase rural multi-grade classes. Du Plessis and Subramanien (2014) explored the challenges for multi-grade teachers in a rural Uitenhage District of South Africa’s Eastern Cape Province. These scholars focused in multi-grade teaching in various provinces in South Africa. The study that I conducted turned to the

principals as heads of institutions and also engaged in teaching multi-grade classes in schools that they managed in the context of Sisonke District of South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province.

As stated earlier, according to Juvane, (2005), multi-grade teaching refers to the situation where one teacher instructs learners of different ages, grades and abilities at the same time. Multi-grade teaching occurs in various forms depending to the need of each school where it occurs. In other schools, only two grades are combined and in others it is above that. In the context of South Africa, particularly in farm schools in deep rural areas, multi-grade teaching could involve a teacher teaching across five grades in a single classroom (Little, 2001). According to SAASS report for ordinary schools for 2010 and 2011 presented in 2013, multi-grade classes are most common in rural and farm schools where there are not enough learners to justify separated classes. In some instances though, the report cites that the problem could be attributed to a shortage of classrooms. Table 2.3 illustrates the distribution of schools with multi-grade classes in South Africa in 2010 and 2011. This table illustrates clearly the exact total number of schools in the province, schools practising multi-grade teaching and finally figures converted into percentages.

Table 2.3: The number and percentages of schools with multi-grade classes by province, in 2010 and 2011 in South Africa.

Province	2010			2011		
	Number of schools with multi-grade classes	Total number of schools	%of schools with multi-grade classes	Number of schools with multi-grade classes	Total number of schools	% of schools with multi-grade classes
Eastern Cape	2 087	5 745	36.3	1 929	5 753	33.5
Free State	813	1 712	47.5	380	1 425	26.7
Gauteng	276	2 483	11.1	302	2 559	11.8
KwaZulu-Natal	1 331	6 008	22.2	815	6 107	13.3
Limpopo	829	4 084	20.3	523	4 073	12.8
Mpumalanga	468	1 927	24.3	500	1 928	25.9
Northern Cape	202	617	32.7	178	607	29.3
North West	316	1 678	18.8	327	1 655	19.8
Western Cape	372	1 616	23.0	385	1 640	23.5
National	6 694	25 870	25.9	5 339	25 747	20.7

Source: South African Department of Basic Education 2010 and 2011 Annual School Survey.

Table 2.3 indicates the distribution of schools with multi-grade classes, by size and province. The majority (over 6 000) of schools with multi-grade classes can be classified as small schools. The majority of these schools were situated in the Eastern Cape (1 658) and KwaZulu-Natal (759).

Table 2.4: Number of schools with multi-grade classes, by province and school level in 2010 and 2011

Province	2010				2011			
	Combined	Primary	Secondary	Total	Combined	Primary	Secondary	Total
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	870	1 175	42	2 087	802	1 087	40	1929
<b>Free State</b>	98	710	5	813	87	291	2	380
<b>Gauteng</b>	74	160	42	276	89	156	57	302
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	235	1 039	57	1 331	149	660	6	815
<b>Limpopo</b>	70	676	83	829	38	464	21	523
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	74	371	23	468	84	380	36	500
<b>Northern Cape</b>	31	168	3	202	21	152	5	178
<b>North West</b>	53	239	24	316	53	251	23	327
<b>Western Cape</b>	72	298	2	372	79	303	3	385
<b>National</b>	1 577	4 836	281	6 694	1 402	3 744	193	5 339

Source: South African Department of Basic Education 2010 and 2011 Annual School Survey

According to the South African Department of Basic Education (SADBE) 2010 and 2011 Annual School Survey, in 2011, approximately 21% (5 339) ordinary schools in the country had multi-grade classes. The majority of these schools were in the Eastern Cape which had 1 929 schools. The province of the Eastern Cape was followed by KwaZulu-Natal which had 815 schools. About one third (approximately 34%) of the ordinary schools in the Eastern Cape reported that they had multi-grade classes, while close to 30% of ordinary schools in the Northern Cape did so. Gauteng reported the least statistics portion of schools with multi-grade classes in 2011, it reported 12%. Nationally, there was a decrease in the number of schools with

multi-grade classes from 6 694 in 2010 to 5 339 in 2011 which is approximately 14 % decrease. However, four provinces which is the Gauteng, the Mpumalanga, North West and the Western Cape showed a slight increase in number of schools with multi-grade classes over this two year period. Table 2.5 below shows the number of schools with multi-grade classes in each Education District of KwaZulu-Natal.

Table 2.5: Multi-grade teaching schools in Districts of KwaZulu-Natal (2012)

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SCHOOLS</b>
Amajuba	54
Uthungulu	53
Ilembe	50
Umkhanyakude	36
Uthukela	60
Pinetown	11
Sisonke	126
Ugu	39
Umgungundlovu	87
Umlazi	12
Umzinyathi	99
Zululand	142
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>769</b>

Source: Discussion Document on the Transformation of the schooling system in KwaZulu-Natal (2012)



Table 2.5 portrays the distribution of multi-grade schools in the context of KwaZulu-Natal across the twelve education districts. The table shows that the highest number of multi-grade classes were in the two districts which are Zululand and Sisonke. According to the discussion document Zululand district had 142 schools and followed by Sisonke District which had 126 schools. These two districts with high figures of multi-grade teaching schools are deep rural districts and this supports the claim made by the SAASS (2013) and Mulryan-Kyne (2004) that multi-grade schools are most common in rural and farm schools where there are not enough learners to justify separate classes. Sisonke District is a deep rural district with a large percentage of the area where different farming activities are practised. According to the statistics provided in the discussion document the two districts that had small figures of schools were Pinetown and Umlazi District. Pinetown District had 11 schools and Umlazi District had 12 schools. The two districts have many of their schools in urban or semi-urban areas. The two districts are part of Durban and surrounding areas. The table shows the difference between what happens in the rural districts and urban and semi-urban districts.

There are a number of reasons that might result in a school having a multi-grade approach. Berry (2001) cites a number of reasons that might create the existence of multi-grade classes in rural settings and they are as follows:

- In situations where there is a high rate of teacher absenteeism, multi-grade teaching is regarded as a solution to avoid having some learners in some classrooms unattended to. One teacher is made to combine two or three grades depending to the situation in place at that particular time.
- In some countries it is a response of uneven/ low learner enrolment.
- It is always associated with small schools in deep rural areas where the population is scattered. In those schools there may be one, two, three or four teachers and only to find that the school offers the complete cycle of a primary school or secondary school. Within this number of teachers in this school, there is a principal of the school. In the context of

South Africa this has been the main cause for schools to have multi-grade classes. This is evident in the studies conducted by Jordann and Joubert (2007), Ngubane, (2011); Gomes, (2013); Subramanien (2014) and Blease (2014). The paper presented by Jordann and Joubert (2007) to share analyzed, multi-grade on line training in South Africa by means of empirical data as well as first-hand experience, with other countries as a contribution to the successful implementation of the Millenium Development Goals reveals a number of factors about the schools under study and these are the factors that made them have multi-grade schools. The study was conducted in the Western Cape and it is revealed that the schools are situated between 260 and 410 km from Cape Town. None of these schools was situated near a tarred road. They further expose that these schools are situated approximately between 21 km and 70 km from the nearest town. All the schools they studied were schools in the deep rural areas of Western Cape and therefore multi-grade schooling became the solution in those areas. Little (2006); Bhardwaj (2008) and Taole and Mncube (2012) contend that multi-grade teaching approach of education receives consideration as a model of education that can provide viable opportunity for educational delivery in remote rural areas.

These reasons for multi-grade classes as reported by Berry (2001) correlates with the reasons that are mentioned by Lindstrom and Lindhahl (2011). Their reasons are contained in the article that they wrote focusing on the effect of mixed age classes in Sweden. The two reasons that they state are that mixed age group classes exist because of:

- Demographic and economic necessity. This means that the number of children in the area is small to form a class or there are very few teachers to teach all grades. The study to investigate the problems faced by multi-grade teachers in rural schools conducted by Taole (2014) in South Africa also shows that the schools that were studied were very deep rural schools and demographic conditions forced schools to establish multi-grade classes. Similarly, Du Plessis and Subramanien (2014) also conducted a study to explore the challenges experienced by a group of 19 multi-grade teachers in the Uitenhage District of South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. Eastern Cape is one of the provinces in South Africa where multi-grade schools form a large fraction (Gardiner, 2008; Joubert, 2010; Du Plessis, 2014). This study then seeks to focus to the context of

multi-grade teaching in the context of KwaZulu-Natal as one of the provinces in South Africa where multi-grade teaching prevails.

- It is believed that these classes have pedagogical benefits.

In the case where the setting arises through pedagogic choice, Joubert (2004) cites a number of terms that are used to refer to this situation. Terms like vertical grouping, ungraded, non-graded and family grouping are used.

In 1980s onwards, in Sweden, the number of mixed age (MA) classes increased rapidly (Lindstrom and Lindhahl, 2011). This is a result of the belief in pedagogical benefits of MA classes as stated by Lindstrom and Lindhahl, (2011). They report that in year 2000, approximately one third of all Swedish learners in first three years of schooling attended MA or multi-grade classes and about one quarter of the learners in Grade 4 and 5 did so. This is the belief that the Swedish had concerning the mixed age classes and the quality of education for their children. It becomes very vital for us to develop an understanding as to why multi-grade classes exist in the South African context. The literature reveals a number of reasons for the existence of multi-grade classes or mixed age classes in different countries. Lindstrom and Lindhahl (2011) mentioned that one of the major reasons for the existence of multi-grade classes in Sweden is that the quality of education in those schools is very high because numbers are low and manageable. It is also believed that in these schools, human relationship is good amongst the concerned stakeholders which is teachers, learners and parents. This works very well for them in their context and as a result a number of family schools have been established to serve this purpose. However, the literature in the South African context reveals something that is different to their findings.

South African literature reveals that multi-grade classes exist through necessity and low enrolment figures in schools not by choice (Joubert, 2004; Ngubane, 2011; Gomes, 2013; Du Plessis & Subramanien, 2014). It is in this case where it is found that terms like forced mixed-age class and forced mixed grade are used to refer to multi-grade classes. Most of the schools where multi-grade teaching instead of monograde teaching exists are found in deep rural areas where the population is sparsely distributed (Tsolakidis & Constantinidi, 2006). The enrolment

figures are low in these schools because the population of the area cannot make adequate figures to make one class, therefore teachers find themselves forced to combine different grades together to make a single class. Lindstrom and Lindhahl (2011) cite that mixed age classes were the possible way of organizing schools due to low population density. They further highlight that even today in rural areas in Sweden the mixed age classes are mainly found and formed out of necessity. In those multi-grade classes in many situations, the principal is also one of the teachers handling the multi-grade class and also managing the school simultaneously. In a similar vein, the recent studies in the South African context still indicate that these schools exist in South Africa. A study conducted by Subramanien (2014) was conducted in the Free State Province of South Africa with 20 multi-grade teachers. Its purpose was to ascertain the challenges related to multi-grade teachers. In another South African province, the Eastern Cape, a similar study was also conducted by Du Plessis (2014) to also ascertain challenges for multi-grade teachers in a rural district in South Africa. All this indicates that multi-grade practice is spread though out all the provinces of South Africa.

It is vital for learners who reside in these areas with low population to also get education in the same way as learners in other areas do. The Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, Chapter 2, Section 29 clearly states that all children have the right to go to school. In addition to this, in South Africa there is White Paper 6 which gives emphasis on „Education for All“. The content of these acts commits the South African government to ensure that there are schools even in areas that are remote. This should be made a reality because in those areas there are human beings that also need to be educated and enjoy the benefits of the acts. This study then focused on principals of schools in the context of KwaZulu-Natal province in one district who managed schools where there were low enrolment figures, leading to one or two teachers employed in the school. These principals were simultaneously enmeshed in school management and multi-grade class teaching as well. It intended to explore their working experiences as professionals responsible for two crucial roles in schools where they were stationed.

In the next section, I present what the principal-cum teachers are engaged in when implementing the curriculum as the core business in multi-grade school.

#### 2.7.1.6.2. *The practice of teaching and learning in multi-grade schools.*

In Africa, the national governments require all schools to follow the national curricula (Joubert, 2006). Joubert further cites that the application of a single grade teaching national curriculum in the multi-grade situation creates problems for multi-grade teachers. Daniel (2004) cites a number of concerns about the syllabi when applied to a multi grade class. He cites that such syllabus is not properly tailored for multi-grade classes. In a similar vein, Juvane (2005, p. 24) concurs and claim that „most often, the designed curriculum lacks relevance and is dysfunctional when applied to the socio-economic needs and cultural lifestyles of multi-grade teaching learners and their communities“. What is to be considered here is that it is designed in a fashion which suits the environment of a mono grade and there are no directions or provisions made when it is applied to a multi-grade class. As a result, the syllabus puts a heavier workload on multi-grade teaching practitioners compared with their mono-grade teaching colleagues.

The syllabi impacts negatively on the ability of the multi-grade teaching practitioners, considering the lack of resources and management problem at the local level (Daniel, 2004). Berry (2001) shares the similar sentiment and agrees that the conceptual and skill requirement of the prescribed curriculum are too great for multi-grade teachers to cope with, given the pressing problems and concerns which have to be addressed in the multi-grade teaching situation. The syllabi do not allow for the time constraints placed on multi-grade teaching teachers, given the preparation time required and the need to address a wider range of students“ needs. The recommendation that Joubert (2006) makes is to find modalities to address this curriculum issue. Based on these concerns about the syllabi and multi-grade teaching, it then became important to get closer to the situation and explore the experiences of the teachers in this situation, particularly if these people were heads of the institutions and also engaged in the implementation of the syllabi that is surrounded by these issues.

There are various strategies that are applied to teach multi-grade classes. Little (2001) gives a number of strategies that are applied in multi-grade classes to make teaching and learning easy. One of the strategies is teaching the whole class simultaneously, ability grouping within the class

irrespective of grades and grouping by grades in some subjects while teaching whole class simultaneously. Little (2001) suggests all these strategies that can be applied but concludes by stating that the most prevalent strategy is unknown. If the most prevalent strategy is unknown it means it is the responsibility of the teacher handling the multi-grade class to discover the suitable strategy for his/her own class. This then raises a question: How possible it is for a teacher who is the head of the institution, carrying all the assigned duties to the principal to have enough time to handle a multi-grade class effectively and seek successfully the relevant strategy that impacts positively and fruitfully for his/her practice? Hence, this study sought to explore the principal-cum teachers' experiences of performing these two crucial roles in the multi-grade school context.

In multi-grade classes, each teacher has his/her own style of teaching the multi-grade class. In some schools, learners are made to work more individually. In other schools the focus is given on grade-specific teaching. Lindstorm and Lindhahl (2011) cites that in some schools subjects are treated differently. They highlight that subjects like Natural Sciences and Social Sciences are taught to all learners simultaneously and leave a big percentage of time for group activities and thematic organisation of the subject whereas, in subjects like Mathematics and Athletics, teaching is often done separately for each grade. To make this exercise possible, the involved teacher has to have relevant skills and techniques to make this a reality and authentic. This shows how difficult the situation is in the context of multi-grade school.

## ***2.8. Complicated school management in small schools***

Leadership in small schools is a bit challenging and requires on-going support from all stakeholders. Halsey (2011) asserts that it is essential for governments and policy makers to understand small school leadership. The claim that Halsey (2011) makes is based on the assumption that in Australia, these schools form a very large portion of the schools that they have. It is therefore vital for the Australian government to ensure that the principals of schools are well equipped to function effectively in this situation. This is what one of the respondents said in the study that Halsey (2011, p. 9) conducted:

“The job is huge. Really it is two jobs rolled into one and there are never enough hours in the day to complete all that is asked of you so you work very long hours to get the job done properly. In remote communities many extra tasks fall on the principal because the school is the centre of the community. This fact is often overlooked or not really understood by others in urban areas”.

This is in line with what Whelan and Clark (2010, p. 25) suggests about principals’ professional development. They state that „many principals cannot be successful without the best possible district leadership“. In the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Education has joined with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and designed a development programme for principals, known as PMDP. The programme covers a large area on the roles and areas that the principal plays in the school. This programme has got a number of outputs that have to be produced at the end of each module. This is a very beneficial programme that gives a clear direction to principals in school leadership. However, the programme is still silent about specific methods of leadership that can be utilized by principals in small schools. What is covered in the programme is the continuation of the existing policy whereby all schools follow the same policy irrespective of their sizes and their individual needs.

Starr and White (2008) conducted a study about small rural schools in the context of Australia and they found that a deep understanding of the context is crucial to appreciating the complexities and challenges of rural principals. Their study also highlighted the significance of improving the systems, policies and priorities in shaping the role of a principal of a small school. This is very crucial because these principals work in the environment which is not similar to the one for other colleagues; theirs has a special need. In the study by Starr and White (2008, p. 9), this is what one of the respondents claimed:

“The complexity of the role needs to be acknowledged by the employing authorities. Being a leader in a small rural school requires a high level of emotional intelligence and understanding of people’s needs. Systems used in metropolitan schools do not work in small settings. It is good in theory but not in practice”.

Principals working in small schools are also engaged in full time teaching. In a study conducted in South Africa by Lumby and Azaola (2011) in Gauteng and North West provinces, all the principals admitted that they had a very heavy teaching load. One of the participants in the study was a female principal in a school with 48 learners who in addition to her management responsibilities had a heavy teaching load. Due to the difficulties in finding a German-speaking teacher, she taught German as well as her specialist subjects. All administration roles were her responsibility. This is an indication that in the school of this nature a principal has to be multi-functional and be very flexible.

Globally, principals have more or less same roles in all the countries. The literature indicates that in all countries principals perform the same roles that range from administration, planning and reflecting, problem solving and organizing, monitoring, financial management, maintenance of schools, dealing with external agencies etc. Within each of these roles there are many other sub-activities that principals are expected to perform before reaching the final stage. In the context of multi-grade schools the principal leads all these activities together with multi-grade class teaching which is what takes place in this study. In the preceding section, I looked at the practice of teachers in multi-grade classes and it portrayed a picture of what happens behind doors in multi-grade classes. Therefore, this study allowed me to study these two crucial roles blended together and performed by a single person in the context of a multi-grade school setting. In the next section, I present the emotions of principals in small schools.

### ***2.9.Emotions of the principals of small schools***

The key role that dominates other roles in the school environment is administration. All the other activities performed by the principal also involve administration. The study conducted by Jones (1999a) in Welsh Valley indicate that principals involved in the study perceived administrative roles as a more negative set of constructs. These are the constructs that emerged in the study: administration as routine, cyclical, ongoing, time-wasting, unplanned, within our control, form filling, bureaucratic, paperwork, and secretarial duties (Jones & Connolly, 2001). These are negative constructs that surround administrative roles in the school environment. If principals



involved in the study had this attitude towards the administration roles, it is likely that even other principals that were not part of the study also carry the same view about the leadership role that they are expected to play in small schools.

In a school environment principals are accountable for everything and every concern that people in the institutions that they lead have. Principals argue that they carry other people's burdens in schools. James and Vince (2001, p. 312) cite that "headteachers carry invisible rucksacks on their backs into which the various people around them deposit rocks". They further elaborate that the rocks that they refer to represent the weight of other people's emotions, behaviour, demands and expectations onto the role of the headteacher. Another outcry by principals is that they "soak up the anxieties of the school" (James and Vince, 2001, p. 312). They experience anxiety because they become responsible for all irregularities that happen in the school and on the human resources in the school environment.

Some of the roles that the principals perform are problematic and time-consuming. One of the key principals' activities that were studied in the study of headteachers leadership experiences conducted by Jones, (1999a) was maintenance of the school. Some of the principals involved in the study managed old schools with leaking roofs. The principals indicated that this role put a lot of pressure on them because the communities where their schools were built expected to see improvements within a short duration. This makes principals to work in a very uncomfortable manner because of the pressure and demands put on them.

In a school environment, some principals work with negative feelings that are constructed by responses from the people that they lead. This is what James and Vince (2001, p. 312) state regarding the causes of the negative feelings of principals in schools: "any senior manager will be the recipient of the projections of others". This resonates very well with what Wildy and Loudon (2000, p. 173) state pertaining to the roles of principals in schools: "in fast-paced and uncertain environments, principals are expected to meet competing expectations about priorities, decision-making processes and school outcomes". The projections and high expectations put on the shoulders of principals cause negative feelings on principals especially if principals do not

meet the interested parties' expectations. People that the principals lead in the organizations have high projections on principals and this forces principals to also have high projections on themselves because of the pressure from the led group. When the person that leads works under pressure, it is then when s/he can start making unnecessary errors in his/her practice as the head of the institution. In this study, I was looking at the principal-cum teachers with their multiple demands and expectations in the context of multi-grade schools. In this situation, principals have to face the demands from the Department of Education and also the community's expectations.

In a study that was conducted by James and Vince (2001) of the emotions of headteachers, it showed that sometimes principals themselves attract expectations onto their roles and invite them. This process creates a vicious circle between expectations and responsibilities of principals where principals start imagining that they are indispensable for the survival of the school. Principals start believing that the schools that they lead cannot survive without them. This tension drives principals to the situation where they struggle to stay free of what James and Vince (2001) refer to as excessive expectation. This situation makes some principals to be reluctant to delegate duties to some staff members in the schools that they lead and this makes them feel anxious. James and Vince (2001) state that teachers that have this experience believe that being a „good enough“ headteacher is „not good enough“. They start developing the pressure to be „perfect“ headteachers and this may weigh heavily on them to the extent that they may stop taking risks in the practice. The process of taking risks in the practice is informed by the ability of not fearing the unknown. Fearing the unknown can be a barrier for a principal to engage himself/herself in school leadership roles. Portsmouth et al. (1999) cited in Walker and Stott (2000) state that in order for change to take place, the manager must be willing to abandon the palliative of the known in favour of the reality of the unknown. They further claim that this reality carries with it a degree of anxiety and stress. In a school environment it becomes very difficult to work when the principal is surrounded by anxiety and stress. Stacey (1996) cites that the conditions that occur as a result of anxiety have to be dealt with accordingly in order for change to occur. However, in multi-grade schools that are under study, it is not that principal-cum teachers are reluctant to delegate duties to other human resources but the personnel is scarce and principals end up carrying most of the load over their shoulders. Principals in schools also

experience isolation from the other staff members in the school. The isolation that the principals experience results on principals developing anger (James & Vince, 2001). The anger impacts negatively on the way that the principals perform their roles in schools. Principals who experience this can distance themselves from the other members of the staff that they lead because they are isolated. In that manner, they will see no need to make any change in the school that they lead.

In some instances principals find themselves faced by dilemmas and predicaments when they are engaged in practice in their respective schools. These are situations which at some point of time put principals in Ireland about decisions that they have to make. Wildy and Loudon (2000) conducted a study on complexity of principal's work in restructuring schools and they encountered three dilemmas. The first dilemma is that principals need to manage a dilemma of autonomy. What is said here is that they need to provide leadership that is strong but shared. This is a very difficult situation because the only situation that you can be assured of its quality is when you have been involved in the entire process. The second dilemma that principals are faced with is efficiency dilemma. Principals need to provide leadership that is both democratic and efficient in terms of the amount of time and effort committed to decision making. The third dilemma is that principals are confronted with an accountability dilemma. This means that principals are accountable for schools' compliance with policies set by government and school systems. On the other side they also need to build local commitment to the policies which is a very demanding exercise to do. This is a process because if people decide not to adhere themselves to the policies it becomes a problem for the manager to bend them so that they comply. This requires a very high skill and ability of convincing people to develop understanding. Exploring principal-cum teachers' experiences of working in multi-grade school can contribute to the bank of knowledge as to how they experience this dilemma in the multi-grade school context as heads of institutions.

One of the stressors in principals' work is resistance from people that they lead. In a study of school restructuring conducted by Wildy and Loudon (2000, p. 180), under autonomy dilemma,

one of the principals involved found that working with HODs was problematic. This is what they state concerning this matter: “the principal acknowledges the difficulty of enlisting support from senior staff and in this vignette, fails to gain their public support”. In this issue the principal found it difficult to get the HODs’ support and he was judged by some school administrators as someone that does not involve senior staff members in decision-making process and is classified as autocratic (Wildy & Loudon, 2000). In the very same study, one of the roles that principals were doing was managing teachers’ performance. In this activity the principal introduces a centrally imposed policy of performance management by setting up a process to monitor students’ performance. Very few school administrators view this as a decisive and realistic solution to a challenging problem. The majority of them claim it as autocratic, authoritarian and sneaky. For that reason, the principal does not share responsibility with staff and collaborative leadership collapses. In this section, I have looked at the different emotions that principals develop in schools due to their exposure in different conditions. In the next section I look at the curriculum in South Africa which is one of the tasks that the principal-cum teachers were engaged in.

## ***2.10. The school curriculum in the South African context***

### ***2.10.1. What underpins the school curriculum?***

This study focused on the principal-cum teachers’ experiences as heads of institutions and simultaneously teaching multi-grade classes. These principals’ engagement in full time teaching multi-grade classes fully engage them in the curriculum implementation in schools that they manage. In their environment, they do not teach mono grade classes but they handle multi-grade classes. The PMDP (2011) asserts that since in the school, the core-business is curriculum delivery, the principal is accountable for how the curriculum is implemented and the results that the school achieves but the principals under study are simultaneously implementing the curriculum and also accountable for how it is implemented in schools. Hence, I decide to include this section on curriculum so as to have a picture of what the principal-cum teachers are faced with in their practice.

The nature of existence and the core-function of each institution of learning, including ordinary schools is teaching and learning (PMDP, 2011). In addition to the core-function of the school there are also other functions that arise as a result of the core function which is teaching and learning. These functions may include administration roles, security services in the school and lay-counselling. These functions are supposed to be performed by specialists that are appointed to perform them in the organization. People with relevant expertise suitable for these positions make sure that they are administered accordingly adhering to the policies. The principal as the head of institution is there to see to it that everything is in order.

Coming back to the issue of the core-function of the school which is teaching and learning, it is vital to take into consideration as to how teaching and learning take place in the school. Teaching and learning take place in the form of curriculum. There are various forms of definitions of the concept curriculum but I will refer to curriculum as all the learning, teaching and assessment activities and experiences taking place in a school (PMDP, 2011). During the teaching and learning process, it is where teachers engage themselves in providing quality teaching to learners. This correlates well with the South African Council of Educators' (SACE) promulgated seven roles of educators. One of the seven roles is that the teacher is the designer of the learning programme and the lifelong learner. This elicits the importance of teachers engaging themselves in lifelong learning so that they can be excellent interpreters and implementers of the curriculum. Therefore, having a clearer understanding of the curriculum in schools contributes to developing understanding of the situation in which the principal-cum teachers are involved.

Curriculum implementation in the context of South Africa correlates with the zones and roles of leadership as contemplated in the model of understanding teacher leadership in South Africa by Grant (2008, b). The model by Grant encapsulates four zones of leadership and six roles that the teacher plays in these different zones. In zone one of the model, which is the classroom, the teacher has a role of continuing to teach and improve his/her own teaching. In zone two, it is where a teacher works with other teachers outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities. Within this zone the principals under the study had three roles that they

played. In this zone teachers have a role of providing curriculum knowledge, a role of leading in-service education and assisting other teachers and a role of participating in performance evaluation of teachers. In South African schools, performance evaluation of teachers is promulgated and enshrined in Collective Agreement 8 of 2003 which specifically focuses on the IQMS. Therefore both Grant's (2008, b) model of understanding teacher leadership in schools and Collective Agreement 8 of 2003 emphasise the role for performance evaluation by the educational leader.

In zone three of the model which focuses on the teacher outside the classroom in whole school development there are two roles. The roles are organizing and leading peer reviews of school practice and participating in school level decision making. In this zone, the leader is expected to have inputs in internal decision making process regarding the curriculum matters. The leader is also expected to extend the roles and contribute towards shaping the school practice in the curriculum implementation. In zone four, the teacher plays roles between neighbouring schools and the community. The roles attached here enable the teacher with curriculum development knowledge to lead in-service education and assist other teachers. Both these roles in this zone are roles that are also relevant to the principal of the school. The principal as the head of institution must be resourceful in such a way that s/he is able to provide the teachers in the school with genuine information that helps them in their practice. This goes back to the role of educators as stated by SACE which is lifelong learning by educators. It is only through learning that principals will be able to acquire relevant information for curriculum development in the schools that they lead.

Considering all the teaching, learning and assessment activities that a teacher has to perform in the implementation process, one realizes that this requires a teacher that is fully committed to his/her profession. This full commitment is in line with what Hoyle (1980) refers to as extended professionalism. Extended professionalism is when the teacher does not restrict himself to perform classroom based roles only but goes beyond and engages in extra roles for the school benefit and professional development. One of the roles mentioned in the model by Grant

(2008.b) is leading in-service education and assisting other teachers. These are the roles that are very important in the curriculum implementation in the school because the in-service education provides teachers with the latest knowledge that is relevant for their practice. Fullan, (1990) claims that the in-service sessions are very important because they are organized by people inside the school who understand exactly the areas that need development in the school. Professional development session supports the idea of Hoyle, (1980) which he calls the professionalization of practitioners which is one of the factors that contribute to good performance of teachers in the school. However, in this study the focus was on principals who should be organizing these in-service education programmes for staff development and simultaneously they also had to be professionally developed because they were also fully involved in the curriculum implementation. Therefore, this study sought to explore what were their experiences as interpreters of learning programmes, programmes designers, implementers of the curriculum and heads of institutions.

#### *2.10.2. The curriculum in the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases in South Africa*

It is understood that considering the literature on curriculum might sometimes confuse the reader as to why it is included in this literature. The literature on curriculum is very important in this study because it is about principals who are fully committed on implementing it in multi-grade classes. Therefore, these principals need to have a clear understanding of the curriculum because they both implement and manage the curriculum. Nationally, in South Africa all schools follow the same curriculum as stated earlier in this chapter. The South African schools' curriculum is clearly spelt out in the National Curriculum Statements Grade R-12 (January, 2012). This policy contains the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* (CAPS) for each approved school subject; *National Policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements* (NPPPPR) *of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* and *National Protocol for Assessment* (NPA) *Grades R-12* (January 2012). Therefore, whatever the teachers do in schools where they practise, they need to operate within the confinements of the prescribed policies and the instructional time as promulgated in the policies. The principals that were studied in this study were engaged in teaching multi-grade classes and giving a clear picture of the prescribed curriculum and different time allocations for subjects contributes to the clearer understanding of the phenomenon. Hence,

in the next section I present instructional time allocation for different phases in which these principals operated. The instructional time is as per the National Curriculum Statements Grade R-12 (2012) is presented in Tables 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8.

Table 2.6: Foundation Phase Curriculum (Grade R- 3)

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>GRADE R (HOURS)</b>	<b>GRADE 1-2 (HOURS)</b>	<b>GRADE 3 (HOURS)</b>
Home Language	10	8/7	8/7
First Additional Language		2/3	$\frac{3}{4}$
Mathematics	7	7	7
Lifeskills	6	6	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning knowledge</li> </ul>	(1)	(1)	(2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative Arts</li> </ul>	(2)	(2)	(2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical Education</li> </ul>	(2)	(2)	(2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal and Social Well-being</li> </ul>	(1)	(1)	(1)
<b>TOTAL</b>	23	23	25



Table 2.7: Intermediate Phase Curriculum (Grade 4-6)

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>HOURS</b>
Home Language	6
First Additional Language	5
Mathematics	6
Natural Sciences and Technology	3,5
Social Sciences	3
Life Skills	4
• Creative Arts	(1,5)
• Physical Education	(1)
• Personal and Social Well-being	(1,5)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27,5</b>

Table 2.8: Senior Phase Curriculum (Grade 7 to 9)

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>HOURS</b>
Home Language	5
First Additional Language	4
Mathematics	4.5
Natural Sciences	3
Social Sciences	3
Technology	2
Economics Management Sciences	2
Life Orientation	2
Creative Arts	2
Total	<b>27,5</b>

The tables given above illustrate the distribution of time per subjects per week in the primary schools in South Africa. The time provided is contemplated in the National Curriculum Statement Grade R to 12 (2012). All South African schools follow similar time allocation when they design their composite time table for teachers. This condition applies to teachers who teach mono grades, teachers who specialize in different subjects in schools as well as teachers who teach multi-grade classes in their schools. The onus rests with individual schools to design their time table to suit their curriculum, learners' needs, as well as the number of teachers implementing curriculum in the school. I need to reiterate this: in many instances, most of the principals working in small schools are also considered when distributing teaching duty loads amongst the teachers in the schools. They also get a big chunk in as far as teaching load is concerned. An example of this situation is a study that was conducted by Lumby and Azaola (2011) on women principals in small schools, one of the principals involved was teaching a multi-grade class consisting of Grade 1 to Grade 3 learners. She had to perform all the classroom roles as a subject teacher and above that she was faced with management duties assigned to the formal position that she held in the institution. This situation aroused interest to realize how such principals ensure balance between the duties of providing learners with quality education and providing good institutional management simultaneously, which I think it would be learnt after this study.

### ***2.11. Gaps identified in the literature regarding principal-cum teachers practise.***

This study involved teachers who are simultaneously principals of schools and also multi-grade teachers in their schools. The literature underpins a number of roles that are attached under each of these categories or areas where these principals operate. A number of roles assigned to principals of schools has been discussed and a number of roles or activities assigned to curriculum implementers has been discussed. In the context of these schools where these principals worked, these roles were performed by one person who played roles of being the principal and the role of being the multi-grade teacher. Hence, one of the aims of the study was to explore the daily roles and responsibilities of principals of multi-grade schools. .

I will reiterate this: the core business of an educational institution is teaching and learning that benefits the main beneficiaries, which is the learners. I have already stated that in order for this to be possible, a school needs well-grounded leadership and management that offer concrete guidance that results to effective teaching and learning in the institution. In this study, both these crucial roles were played by one person, which is the school principal. It was, therefore, important to explore closely as to how principals managed these crucial roles in the context of multi-grade schools. Furthermore, exploration for understanding as to how principals balanced their duties in this context was important. It was very important to understand how these principals ensured effective school management and providing quality education to learners in the context of multi-grade schools.

Loock (2003) asserts that the task of the school principal or any educational leaders has become increasingly complex and constrained. He states that principals find themselves locked in with less room to manoeuvre. In this study, principals are found in a situation that another person cannot describe easily until s/he gets the taste of being in the situation. Therefore to be able to feel the taste of the practice, it became crucial to work closely with these principals and explore their experiences of working in this situation. Through the exploration of their experience, I could draw their strategies employed in this practice as well as many other lessons that could be learnt through their engagement and their ways of doing things in this practice as practitioners performing the two crucial roles in the school.

## ***2.12. Conclusion***

The literature has focused on the importance of the two concepts, which are management and leadership in the life of an educational institution. The revelation has been observed as to how the two concepts are pertinent to be existing elements in the roles of the principal in the organization. In this literature, it has been made known that the sizes of schools are not the same. Some schools are big in size which advantages them in terms of staffing, funding as well as in

resources. Other schools are smaller in sizes which also have an impact in the number of learners, staffing and also curriculum implementation. The literature on small schools has also been considered and looked at from all angles. The challenges of small schools have also been discussed. One of the challenges of small schools is multi-grade teaching practice. The literature revealed that in rural context multi-grade teaching in South Africa prevails and it is not by choice like in other countries but it is due to circumstances which are beyond control. Therefore, literature on multi-grade teaching has also been dealt with and various strategies employed by teachers have been discussed. The literature revealed that teachers have a number of roles that they are expected to play in the curriculum implementation in schools. Each subject is allocated a number of hours allocated for it, and there are many activities and sub-activities expected of the teacher in each subject. The emotions of principals have also been discussed. The content of the literature leaves a number of unanswered questions when one looks at the practice closely. It is these areas that triggered me to embark on a study of this nature.

The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework aligning this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### *3.1.Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the theoretical framing that guided the study. The selected theoretical framing guided the research and provided the conceptual tools from which I began to explore, understand, describe and explain the practice of principals engaged in school leadership and management as well as teaching multi-grade teaching in schools they managed. The theoretical framing attempts to develop the connectivity of theory with the focus of the study and it is mostly used during the data analysis chapters and the conclusion and recommendations chapters.

The theories, namely social practice theory (Wenger, 1998) and capability approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000a), made up the theoretical framework of this study. The social practice theory receives dominant attention because it contains most of the aspects that have to do with the studied participants in their practice. The capability approach was utilized to explore the capability of principal-cum teachers in the context of multi-grade schools. Clarity to this will prevail as I go further with the discussion of each.

This chapter begins by developing understanding of origination and development of Wenger's social practice theory as presented in his work, namely, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* (Wenger, 1998). A detailed account of Wenger's theory is presented since it encapsulates most of the theoretical framework used in chapter five, six and seven. In these chapters, it is where I explore the PCTs perceptions and engagement in multi-grade school management and multi-grade teaching, which is the process of learning. I also explore what it means for them to be enmeshed in this practice. In the next section I try to present significance of

the social practice theory to this study. The next section after the social practice theory is the short description of the capability approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000a).

### ***3.2. Towards understanding the social practice theory***

#### *3.2.1. The work of Wenger (1998): Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*

The argument that Wenger (1998) makes is that we should adopt a perspective that places learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world. According to Wenger (1998, p. 3) we learn in all the activities that we do on daily bases like eating and sleeping and, according to him, that is life sustaining and those engaged become “quite good”. He further states that learning is a fundamentally social phenomenon. Wenger calls his work a “social theory of learning” with its own set of assumptions and its own focus. He further states that within this context, “it does constitute a coherent level of analysis and yields a conceptual framework from which to derive a consistent set of general principles and recommendations for understanding and enabling learning” (p.4). Here are the four main assumptions that he states about learning:

- (a) We are social beings (this is a central aspect of learning).
- (b) Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprise.
- (c) Knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprise.
- (d) Meaning- our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it is meaningful- is ultimately what learning is to produce.

The key focus of these assumptions is that this theory is based on learning through participation in the society. The emphasis made is that participation should be a more reactive process whereby participants participate in social activities and develop their identities based on their engagement in communities. His further argument is that such participation shapes not only what we do but also who we are and how we interpret what we do as practitioners in the practice. In

his theory, there are four components. The four components are meaning, practice, community and identity. According to Wenger (1998) these components of learning are deeply interconnected and mutually defining. He argues that these components are necessary to characterize social participation as a process of realising things. The four components as extracted from his work for year (1998) are shown in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: The elements of Wenger's Social Theory of Learning (1998, p. 5)



### 3.2.2. What do these four components entail? (Community, Identity, Practice and Meaning)

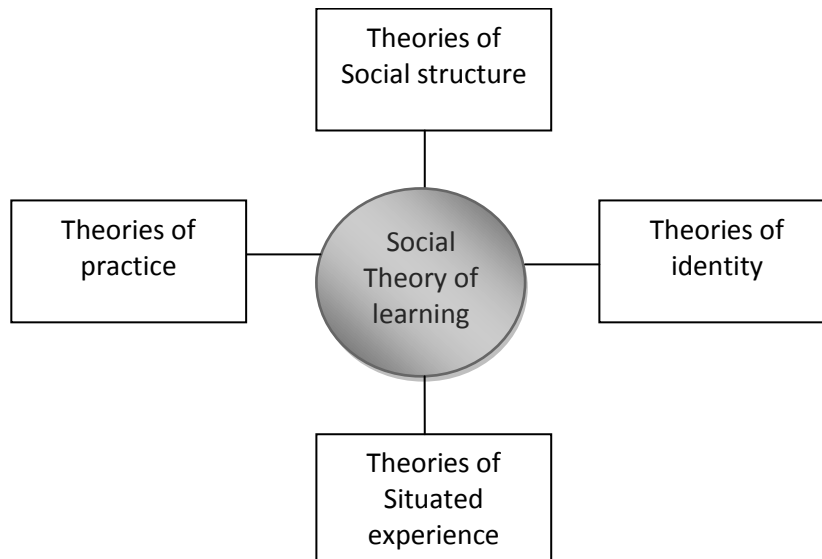
The four components overlap in the learning process. Meaning, as a component is described as a way of talking about our ability individually and collectively. It is a way of experiencing our life and the world. Practice is a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action irrespective of what the conditions are. Community is a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence. The last component which is identity is defined as a way of talking about how the process of learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities.

In their earlier book, Lave and Wenger (1991) tried to distil among various studies of apprenticeship. Their intention was trying to develop understanding as to how such studies could contribute to a general theory of learning. In that book, they used the concept of *legitimate peripheral participation* to characterize learning. Their intention was to broaden the traditional connotations for the concept of apprenticeship- from a master/ student or mentor / mentee relationship to one of changing participation and identity transformation in a community of practice. The two concepts which are identity and community of practice were important to their argument but according to their understanding they were not given the spotlight and were left unanalysed. In the social theory of learning the two concepts receive attention and they are given full consideration.

According to Wenger (1998) the theory of learning that he presents fits into a number of disciplines with the inclusion of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, cognitive and social psychology and educational theory and practice. However, the main tradition to which he believes his work belongs to is the social theory which he refers to as ill-defined field of conceptual inquiry at the intersection of philosophy, the social sciences and the humanities. In this context, Wenger sees the social theory of learning as being positioned at the intersection point of intellectual traditions. The two main axes are illustrated in figure 3.2 and they are discussed after the illustration.



Figure 3.2: Two main axes of social theory as presented by Wenger (1998, p.12).



### 3.2.3. *Two main axes of social theory*

Wenger asserts that in the tradition of social theory, the vertical axis is a central one. The argument made is that the vertical axis reflects a tension between theories that give primacy to social structure and those that give primacy to action. In the vertical axis, the theories of social structure give primacy mostly to institutions, norms and rules. The emphasis is on cultural systems, discourse and history. The theories of social structure seek underlying explanatory structures that account for social patterns and tend to view action as a mere realization of these structures in specific circumstances. The opposite point which is the theories of situated experience gives primacy to the dynamics of everyday existence, improvisation, co-ordination and interactional choreography. The emphasis is on agency and intentions. They focus mostly on interactive relations of people with their environment, the focus on the experience and the local construction of individual or interpersonal events such as activities and conversations. The two intersecting points for both the theory of social structure and theories of situated experience is learning. According to Wenger (1998) learning as participation is certainly caught in the middle. The point he makes is that learning takes place through engagement in actions and interactions but it embeds this engagement in culture and history.

The horizontal axis is set against the backdrop of the vertical one. This axis provides a set of midlevel categories that mediate between the poles of the vertical axis. The theories of social practice address the production and reproduction of specific ways of engaging with the world. These theories are concerned with everyday activity and real life settings but with an emphasis on the social systems of shared resources by which groups organize and co-ordinate their activities, mutual relationship, and interpretation of the world. On the other point of the axis, the theories of *identity* are concerned with the social formation of the person, the cultural interpretation of the body and the creation and use of markers of membership such as rites of passage and social categories. The focus is on the different forms of categorization, association and differentiation in an attempt to understand the person as formed through complex relations of mutual constitution between individuals and groups. In this axis too, learning is also caught in the middle.

#### 3.2.4. *The concept of practice*

As human beings we are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises. In attempt to define these enterprises, human beings interact with each other and with the world and tune their relationship with each other and with the world. In this process, it is how people „learn“ (Wenger, 1998, p. 45). The process of this collective learning results to a practice that reflects both the pursuit of enterprises and social relations. This engagement becomes the property of a kind of community which is a result of a shared enterprise and it is called community of practice

Wenger (1998) defines the concept practice by identifying the following aspects, he states that practice:

- (a) Provides resolutions to institutionally generated conflicts such as contradictions between measures and work.
- (b) Supports a communal memory that allows individuals to do their work without needing to know everything.

- (c) Helps newcomers join the community by participating in its practice.
- (d) Generates specific perspectives and terms to enable accomplishing what needs to be done.
- (e) Makes the job habitable by creating an atmosphere in which the monotonous and meaningless aspects of the job are woven into the rituals, customs, stories, events, dramas and rhythms of the community life.

In a practice, each member of the group is important and his/her contributions are very important. It is crucial for all the members in the practice to be aware of their interdependence in making job possible and the atmosphere pleasant. In a practice, members act as resources to each other, exchange information, make sense of situations, share new tricks and new ideas, as well as keeping each other company and spicing up each other's working days. According to Wenger (1998) the concept of practice connotes doing but he clarifies that it is not just doing, it is doing something under certain rules and policies in a social context and that provides the structure, essence and meaning to what is done. On that note, practice becomes a social practice.

The concept of practice includes both the explicit and the tacit. Wenger (1998) identifies a number of elements which practice includes, he states it includes language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well defined roles, specified roles, specified criteria, codified procedures, regulations and contacts that various practices make explicit for a variety of purpose. He further states that it also includes the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognizable intuitions, specific perceptions, underlying assumptions and shared world views. All these may never be articulated yet they do exist in communities of practice. Therefore, the concept of practice highlights the social and negotiated character of both the explicit and the tacit in our lives.

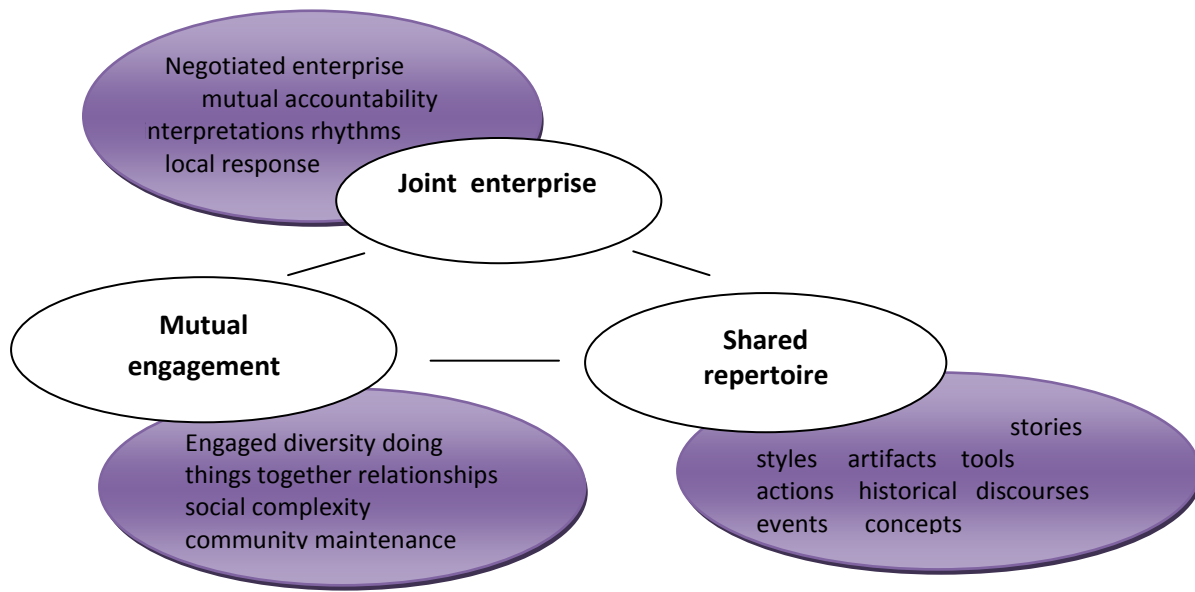
### 3.2.5. *Community*

The practitioners involve themselves in different roles in their different practices. In each practice there are roles that are assigned for the members that engage themselves. When these practitioners engage themselves in the assigned roles, they become members of a certain community. Wenger (1998) associates practice with the formation of community. He starts by making a claim that it is not everything that anybody might call community. He further adds and states that a residential neighbourhood is often called the community but it is usually not a community of practice. Therefore it becomes crucial to develop understanding as to what is the community that he is referring to. To try and develop the meaning of the practice that he refers to, he mentions the two things that it does, he says:

- (a) It yields a more tractable characterization of the concept of practice- in particular, by distinguishing it from less traceable terms like culture, activity or structure.
- (b) It defines a special type of community, a community of practice.

The point that is made is that in this community, the members gather for a certain common purpose and a task they perform. In order to associate practice and community, Wenger (1998) describes three dimensions of the relation by which practice is the source of coherence of a community. They are mutual engagement, joint enterprise and share repertoire. They are illustrated in figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Dimensions of practice as the property of a community (Wenger, 1998, p.73)



#### 3.2.5.1. *Mutual engagement*

According to Wenger (1998) mutual engagement of participants is the first characteristic of practice. To take his argument further, he also states that practice does not exist in vacuum but it takes place through people in actions which have meanings that are communicated to people. The process of practice takes place in a community of people and they develop relations to do whatever they are supposed to do. In this community of practice, membership is by means of mutual engagement and contribution to what takes place. The main contributing factor for belonging to the community of practice is the availability of opportunities and inclusion. The kind of coherence that transforms mutual engagement into a community of practice requires commitment and dedication. It calls for members of the community to be committed in the responsibilities given to them in order to achieve the common purpose they are gathered for. People working together in the community of practice come from different backgrounds, different aspirations and problems. The work that they do takes place on a unique significance in each of their individual lives. Their responses to dilemmas and aspirations are connected by the

relations they create through mutual engagement. During the period that they spend together, they directly influence each other.

Mutual engagement does not only involve the members' competence but also others' competence. Wenger states that "it draws on what we do and what we know as well as on our ability to connect meaningfully to what we do not do and what we do not know- that is to the contributions and knowledge of others" (p,76). Mutual engagement creates relationship among people. When it is sustained, it connects participants in ways that can become deeper and in this sense, community of practice can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships. Good relationships strengthen and enhance shared practice. In a shared practice, participants get connected to each other in paths that are complex and diverse. To sum up this sub-section, I cite Wenger (1998, p. 77) where he states that

*"Mutual relations among participants are complex mixtures of power and dependence, pleasure and pain, expertise and helplessness, success and failure, amassment and deprivation, alliance and competition, ease and struggle, authority and collegiality, resistance and compliance, anger and tenderness, attraction and repugnance, fun and boredom, trust and suspicion, friendship and hatred".*

This is an indication that communities of practice have it all.

### 3.2.5.2. Joint enterprise

The second characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence is the negotiation of a joint enterprise. Wenger (1998, p, 77-78) identifies three points about the enterprise which keeps a community of practice together. He states that:

1. It is the result of a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of mutual engagement.

2. It is defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it. It is their negotiated response to their situation and thus belongs to them in a profound sense, in spite of all forces and influences that are beyond their control.
3. It is not just a stated goal, but creates among participants relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice.

Wenger (1998) argues that the enterprises reflected in our practices are complex. He continues and contends that they include the instrumental, the personal and the interpersonal aspects of our lives. The enterprise shapes who you are in the practice as a member of the community. This is characterized by the mutual engagement which you show in the practice. The mutual engagement in practice is much more complex because it includes all the energy they spend and not only focusing on the task that they do but also in making the place habitable for themselves. Therefore, the daily practice, with its mixture of submission and assertion, is a complex, collectively negotiated response to what they understand to be their situation.

Negotiating a joint enterprise gives rise to relations of mutual accountability among those involved. There are many related aspects that contribute to what the involved people have to account for; it includes what matters and what does not matter; what is important and why is it important; what to talk about and what to leave unsaid and it also includes assessment of actions resulting in realisation of what needs refinement or improvement. This communal regime of mutual accountability plays a central role in defining the circumstances under which the community and individuals feel concerned or unconcerned by what they are doing collegially.

### 3.2.5.3. *Shared repertoire*

The development of shared repertoire is the third characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence. According to Wenger (1998) the elements of the repertoire can be very heterogeneous. They gain their coherence not in and of themselves as specific activities, symbols, or artefacts, but from the fact that they belong to the practice of a community pursuing an enterprise. The repertoire of a community of practice includes style of doing things,

instruments, actions, routines in which things happen, stories, symbols and concepts produced or adopted which then become part of the practice.

The repertoire of community as a resource for the negotiation of meaning is shared in a dynamic and interactive sense. All the members of the community in the practice need to understand the nature of the practice to shape them for mutual engagement. Mismatched interpretations and misunderstandings have to be addressed at an early stage to avoid unnecessary hindrance for mutual engagement. Sustained engagement in shared practice is a dynamic form of co-ordination, one that generates the co-ordinated meanings that allow it to proceed. When there is clear meanings there will be effective mutual engagement.

### ***3.3.Relevance of the social practice theory to the study***

The theory employed in the study contributed positively in the whole process for this study. It really developed my understanding and contributed towards attaining the goals of the study and also served as a reminder about the main purpose of the study. This section discusses and develops the link between the social theory of learning and the phenomenon under study. I illustrate the link in the next section.

#### ***3.3.1. The social practice theory***

In this theory, Wenger (1998) spells out four components of learning that are necessary to characterize social participation as a process of learning. The four components are community of practice, learning, meaning and identity. These four components are interrelated in the learning process.

##### ***3.3.1.1. Meaning***

Meaning as a component was considered to understand views in which the principal-cum teachers could talk or describe their abilities either individually or collectively. When Wenger (1998) describes the process of making meaning of the situation, he states that it is a way of experiencing our life and the world. Considering the rationale for the study, it is then imperative



to explore the principal-cum teachers' experiences in their practice in the context of small multi-grade schools. Meaning as a concept and as one of the components in this situation is involved in a number of ways. The only way in which as a researcher I could generate data for the study was getting the participants descriptions and views of their engagement in the situation. This is the process that would make me understand as to how the principal-cum teachers perceive things or issues around their participation in the issue concerned. Concurrently, on the side of the researcher, the responses or the views from the principal-cum teachers was also very crucial because it is that data that I could develop personal meaning of all the data that I generated. Therefore, meaning became one of the components that were considered for interpretation and analysis of the data on hand.

In order for principal-cum teachers to be able to develop understanding of what it means to be in this situation, a number of factors had to be considered or different areas in their daily life had to be examined. When Wenger explains how meaning is learnt he insists that meaning is developed through situated experiences encountered by a person in life. These experiences are as a result of the dynamics of everyday existence. The principal-cum teachers were also given the opportunity of talking about these dynamics in their work experience. A number of activities is mentioned by Wenger to describe ways of meaning realization. Amongst them, he mentions the processes of improvisation, co-ordination and interactional choreography. All these activities lead towards understanding what it means to be in a particular situation. People's engagement in different roles is influenced by their degree of agency and intentions. These are the forces that drive people to act and become people who they are. When engaging in activities, they interact with other people in their environment who also contribute towards making meaning of who they are. In this study, all the factors that contribute towards self-realization were considered to deepen personal understanding of meaning.

### 3.3.1.2. *Practice*

In the group of four components by Wenger (1998) in his social theory, the second one is practice. The principal-cum teachers under study were teachers who practised as teachers in

schools. Their engagement in the teaching profession as curriculum implementers, curriculum managers and principals qualifies them to be called practitioners. Their life experiences by which they make meaning is obtained in their areas or roles of practice. In their practice as teachers, they have their experiences, views and engagements which could be learnt from them. All this could only be learnt or heard from them by conducting this study. By conducting this study, I believed I could be able to understand their perspectives around the areas under study and what is it that enhanced mutual engagement in action irrespective of what the conditions were. Principal-cum teachers in the study practiced under abnormal conditions which put more tasks on them, it was then vital to conduct a study with them in this practice as practitioners to develop understanding of their practising experiences.

Wenger (1998) identifies a number of aspects that are considered in practice. Amongst them, he sites that in a practice the focus is on production or reproduction of specific ways of engaging in the practice. One of the aims of the study was to look at how the principal-cum teachers sought to manage multi-grade schools. The only way I could learn this was through exploring their individuals' ways of engagement in their multiple roles of leadership and management and handling multi-grade classes. Similarly, in this component too, the nature of activities, engagements and roles also play important role in this component to characterize the nature of practice. In this case, practice of principal-cum teachers could only be learnt by investigating them about issues, activities and engagements that occurred in their real life settings in terms of their professional work.

### 3.3.1.3. *Community*

When the practitioners practise in a particular field, they become part of the community of practitioners where they work. Community is the third component in the theory of social practice by Wenger (1998). In this community, the practitioners find themselves having to understand the policies, regulations and rules in place. They also need to go further and oblige to those prescripts. The configuration process takes place, the member of the community assimilate and become part of the community. The major enterprise in that particular community is the core

business of it. In this case, the enterprise for the principal-cum teachers has been handling multi-grade classes and also being school principals in their community of practice. This study sought to explore the process of social configuration, assimilation and their leadership and management experiences in the enterprise they were engaged in in their different entities.

The principal-cum teachers under study worked in different organizations which had their different cultures of doing things. In the community component, primacy is given to institutional life. One of the aspects of the community is the norm, which is the standards of behaviour that are accepted in it. This is one of the crucial aspects that had to be taken into consideration in order to understand the life experiences as heads of institution as well as ways of managing these institutions. The social norms of the institution are developed and influenced by the school culture and the school's demands. Another aspect that Wenger mentions is the rules and policies of the institution. He asserts that they have a major impact towards what the community looks like. The rules contain values which members of the community are required to adhere to so as to conform. In community as one of the components, the focus was given on cultural systems in place and the nature of discourse.

#### *3.3.1.4. Identity*

The process of mutual engagement of individuals as members of a community congregated for practice leads them towards developing meanings about their enterprise. Their roles and experiences gained in a certain condition and environment contribute towards making them to be able to understand who they are (Wenger, 1998). Hence, the last component which he spells out in his social theory of practice is identity. Identity as a component in the study was utilized to examine the principal-cum teachers understanding of their own identity as teachers engaged in this context. Wenger defines identity as a way of understanding who we are, which tends to create histories of becoming in the context. Their views and perceptions contributed towards understanding how they identified themselves as individuals in this situation of being principal-cum teachers. In this category, there are a number of other factors which could contribute towards who they identify themselves as. Data generated from the participants by utilizing the

number of data collection strategies employed in the study led towards understanding as to how they identified themselves.

In this component of the social practice theory, emphasis for learning is made through complex relations of mutual constitution between individuals and groups. The availability of relations amongst the members of the community is important because it impacts towards developing identity of members engaged. Wenger (1998) cites that in order to understand identity, issues of categorization are taken into consideration. In the case of principal-cum teachers, it was imperative to understand how do they categorise themselves within the teaching fraternity. Along with categorization comes an element of association and it would be another contributing factor of understanding identity. A person's identity can also be influenced by the type of his/her socialization group or people who surround him/her. Another aspect which is mentioned by the theorist under this component is differentiation in an attempt to understand the person. All these aspects were taken into consideration to understand how the principal-cum teachers were identified or identified themselves as teachers enmeshed in a situation simultaneously managing schools and also teaching multi-grade classes.

#### ***3.4. Considering the three dimensions of practice as the property of a community of practice in the study***

The three dimensions of practice as the property of a community mentioned by Wenger (1998) are practice as a joint enterprise, shared repertoire and mutual engagement. These three dimensions were also embraced to explore the practice of principal-cum teachers engaged in the study. Principal-cum teachers under study worked in small schools with very small number of teachers and yet the schools offered full cycle of a primary school. It was very significant to explore their mutual engagement with other people in schools and also explore the extent to which they went to offering effective leadership and management as well handling multi-grade classes in their schools. Wenger (1998) claims that practice exists because of engagement of people engaged in actions whose meanings have been negotiated with them. Therefore, it was imperative to explore how or how far they could explain meanings to the teachers that they managed.

The principal-cum teachers were involved in schools consisting of very small community members and they also fell into the category of teaching staff in their communities. Membership in their communities was by means of mutual engagement and contributions in their practice. Availability of opportunities and inclusion of other teachers in the variety of roles in schools promoted by them was also one of the elements that were observed. This is the process which made me understand how much they exercised their practice as a shared repertoire or decentralizing power in order for things to happen in schools. It was also to test how much the principal-cum teachers regarded practice as a joint enterprise. This is a factor which enabled me the opportunity to explore how they responded to their situation in spite of all forces and influences which were beyond their control. This helped me to understand the role played by other teachers in the school as being delegated by the principal-cum teachers. Including the three dimensions together allowed me to explore a number of aspects which are mentioned by Wenger. I was able to explore the issues of power and dependence, pleasure and pain, amassment and deprivation, ease and struggle, authority and collegiality, resistance and compliance, trust and suspicion as well as relations with the participants under study in their practice as multi-tasking teachers in their communities.

In the next session, I discuss the capability approach which was also considered in the exploration of the PCTs experiences of managing multi-grade schools.

### ***3.5.Capability approach***

Coupled with the social systems theory is the capability approach. The capability approach from Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000a) is useful because it allowed me to explore how the principal-cum teachers managed in the multi-grade schools where they are stationed. The human capability concept was developed by Amarta Sen and expanded by Martha Nussbaum. Sen's (1999) capability approach is about human well-being and the development of various freedoms necessary for people to function well. His capability to the well-being of humans is a "concentration on freedom to achieve in general, and the capabilities to function in particular" (Sen, 1995, p.266). Sen who is an economist formulates the capability approach from the point

of view of an economist rather than from an educational perspective. However, some scholars have argued that education is central to his capability approach (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 7).

The core characteristic of the capability approach is to focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be, based on their capabilities. It is a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies and proposals about social change in society (Robeyns, 2003). The capability approach is used in a wide range of fields, most prominently in development thinking, welfare economics, social policy and political philosophy. In this study, it was used to focus on how the principal-cum teachers were able to function under the unpleasant conditions in their schools. In explaining the capability approach Sen (1993, p. 30) states that:

“The capability approach to a person’s advantage is concerned with evaluating it in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functionings as a part of living. The corresponding approach to social advantage-for aggregative appraisal as well as for the choice of institutions and policy- takes the set of individual capabilities as constituting an indispensable and central part of the relevant informational base of such evaluation”.

The capability approach has two major constituents that underpin it and they are „capability“ and „functionings“. Functionings are the “beings and doings” of a person, whereas a person’s capability is “the various combinations of functionings that a person can achieve. The two constituents are interrelated. This is made clearer by Sen where he asserts that „functioning“ is what one manages to achieve and to do with the capability „the various things a person may value doing or being“ (Sen, 1999, p. 75). Emerging from what Sen claims about the approach it becomes vivid that the focus is on the person’s capability to perform a certain function assigned to him/her. According to Sen (1992) capability is thus a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another. Developing understanding between the two concepts may be confusing and can only be understood through juxtaposing the two. To

develop deeper illustration to lead towards understanding the difference I consider what Sen contends; he states:

“A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is ability to achieve. Functionings are, in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since they are different aspects of living conditions. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedom, in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead” (Sen, 1987: 36).

In this study, this approach was implemented to explore functioning and capabilities of the principal-cum teachers in multi-grade schools. The intention was to explore their experiences which included their achievement, which Sen talks about. In addition, through their experiences as principals of multi-grade schools, I could also explore their abilities to achieve, which is how they managed to manage schools under challenging conditions which are the living conditions according to Sen. According to Alexander (2004, p. 453), if functioning represents what a person manages to achieve in life, capabilities stand for the various combinations of functioning the person might achieve. For that reason, both capability and functioning were necessary to explore how the principal-cum teachers did their work as principals working under unpleasant conditions in multi-grade schools.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the theoretical framework utilized in the study. Focus was given to social practice theory (Wenger, 1998) and a small pinch of capability approach by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000a). Relevancy of these two theories to the study has also been discussed. The next chapter focuses on the methodology applied in the data generation process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### *4.1 Introduction*

The purpose of the study was to explore leadership experiences and coping strategies of principals of multi-grade schools. This chapter presents the methodology and research design employed in order to explore the leadership experiences and coping strategies for principals of multi-grade schools in the context of Ixopo Circuit schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The focus area of discussion includes the type of sampling used, the data generation techniques employed; the procedure for data collection followed, ethical considerations and strategies for ensuring trustworthiness. This chapter also outlines procedures for obtaining permission from the department of education in respect of access and acceptance to conduct the study in five Primary Schools in the Ixopo Circuit under Sisonke District.

The data generation instruments were tailored to enable the researcher to collect sufficient data from the participants to achieve the aims of the study. The aims were:

- To explore the principal-cum teachers' experiences of managing their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools.
- To explore how the principal-cum teachers sought to lead and manage their roles,
- To explore what can we learn from the principal-cum teachers regarding ways of better managing multi-grade schools.

Based on these aims, the study then focused on the following research questions:



## ***4.2 Primary research questions***

1. What are the daily roles of principal-cum teachers and how they experience their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools?
2. How do the principal-cum teachers seek to lead and manage their roles?
3. What can we learn from the principal-cum teachers regarding ways of better leading and managing multi-grade schools?

I conducted an in-depth study using all the employed data generation strategies with the participants in the study. Therefore, this chapter explains the research design and methodologies that were used to get the answers to these research questions, which is the data, that is analysed in chapter five and six of this thesis.

## ***4.3 Research paradigm for the study (Interpretive Paradigm)***

A number of research paradigms have been discussed by researchers like Mertens (1998), Oakley (2000), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), Niewenhuis (2007) and other researchers; however, I will only focus on the paradigm adopted in this study. This section discusses the research paradigm that guided this study and I draw on some key aspects about the selected paradigm. My selected paradigm was the interpretive paradigm.

The study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) interpretive research is not just the effortless collection of data but the working of data so as to discover the essence of the participants' experiences and reasons for doing things the way they do. According to Neuman (2000), interpretive researchers concentrate on how participants define and describe their actions by providing own interpretations. In this study, the main purpose was to investigate principal-cum teachers' actions, attitudes, views, challenges and various leadership experiences of principals of multi-grade schools. These are aspects that cannot

be easily measured. It is for this reason that I adopted the interpretivist approach. In contrast, the positivist researcher focuses on generalizability and objectivity of the study on things that can be measured. The emphasis was on getting description and interpreting the phenomenon, which is exploring the practice of PCTs. In the interpretive paradigm the researcher gets the opportunity to work closely with the people s/he studies and that enables him/her the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the matter s/he studies. In a similar vein, Atkins and Wallace (2012) contends that in the interpretive paradigm the researcher's purpose is to throw light on and develop understanding of a particular case and situation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) further add and state that within the interpretive paradigm the researcher's ultimate goal is to establish a comprehensive narrative to account for human and social behaviour.

Interpretive researchers reject the positivists' views that the social world can be understood in terms of general statements about human actions (Bassey, 1999). According to the interpretive researchers, the descriptions of human interaction are based on social meanings and people living together interpreting the meanings of each other. The meanings are developed by researchers asking questions or by observing the situation that they are interested in researching. Bassey (1999) further elaborates and claims that data generated by interpretive researchers are usually transcripts, diaries, field work notes, and reports of conversations. Bassey (1999) and Atkins and Wallace (2012) believe that the data generated employing the strategies mentioned above is usually richer, in a language sense, than positivist data. Bassey (1999, p.43) further states that "perhaps because of this quality, the methodology of the interpretive researchers is described as qualitative".

Looking at the purpose and rationale of my study, I believed that it was appropriate to locate this study in the interpretive paradigm. This allowed me to get deeper to the situation being studied and enabled me as a researcher to interrogate the participants in order to develop understanding. Another contributing factor was the qualitative methodology that I employed. It allowed the study to employ a variety of data generation methods to collect data for interpretation.

#### **4.4 Research design**

##### **4.4.1. Qualitative approach**

The study was qualitative. In a qualitative study, the data comes in the form of words (Punch, 2006; Niewenhuis, 2007 and McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I therefore found the qualitative design to be the suitable design to explore the PCTs experiences of being in this practice. Niewenhuis (2007, p 50) states that “a qualitative study focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences”. In a similar vein, Newby (2010, p. 115) claims that “qualitative research is concerned with understanding how people choose to live their lives, the meanings they give to their experiences and their feelings about their condition”. All this is in line with the assertion made by Henning *et al* (2004) as they state that a qualitative approach attempts to understand human phenomena and investigates the meaning that people give to the events they experience. The qualitative method as the approach has been employed as the suitable approach that could allow me as a researcher to interrogate and understand the experiences of multi-grade schools principals.

Qualitative research as a research methodology is concerned with understanding the process (Niewenhuis, 2007). In this study, the focus was on the process of principals engaged in school management and also engaged in handling multi-grade classes. Qualitative study always studies people or systems through observing or interaction with participants in their natural environments and focusing on their meanings and interpretations. This methodology allows the researcher to study the participants in their environment and develop an understanding from the participants’ point of view which is participants’ perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It focuses on describing and understanding phenomena within its naturally occurring context with the purpose of understanding of the meanings provided by the respondents. The data that I analysed is the data that was given by the respondents or the actors in my study in their practise context.

Qualitative methodology is context sensitive (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This means that it considers the context where the study takes place and it also considers all the other contextual

factors. This assumption is based on the grounds that settings where things or incidents occur have a great influence in human actions. In the case of this study the context of small schools and multi-grade teaching by principals was the immediate context that I had to spend time closer with trying to understand the phenomenon and the practice of principals. The larger context is also very important when conducting the qualitative study. This assists to understand the contributing meso and macro factors to the context under study and Corbin and Strauss (2007) contends that these form a “lens” through which the researcher interprets behaviour.

One of the great characteristics of qualitative research is that it is a holistic and integrative approach (Niewenhuis, 2007). Qualitative approach is acknowledged of its willingness and freedom to use data of different types and from different sources and combine them into an analysis and interpretation of a phenomenon. In this study, it was relevant because the data was generated using various methods of gathering data and from different sources. The data from these different sources and collected by using various data collections strategies was considered for analysis and interpretation, which is what the qualitative approach is known to intend to promote.

The qualitative methodology was employed because it allows direct data collection by the researcher and engages the researcher with research participants individually face to face in a way that questionnaires or surveys do not (Yin, 1984). This is in line with what McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state about qualitative study, they state that in qualitative study, the researcher acts as an observer in the setting that is being studied, either as the interviewer or the person who studies artefacts and documents. As a researcher, in the qualitative study I got the opportunity to get the information directly from the source. The information obtained was in the form of words which is one of qualitative methodology’s advantages. I had to spend considerable amount of time in direct interaction with the setting and the participants that were under study. As a researcher I was able to probe for clarification whenever there was a need to do so. It was during this period where I was able to gather rich narrative descriptions. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) spell out that in a qualitative study the intent is to provide rich

descriptions that cannot be achieved by reducing pages of narration to numbers. I ensured that nothing escaped scrutiny or was taken for granted.

#### **4.4.2 Case study design**

The study took the form of a case study design. Looking at the different definitions of the term „case study“, the path that it follows and the nature of the study that I intended to conduct, I then decided to consider the case study design. In this study, my focus was on a particular phenomenon or entity that had to be studied to develop understanding, the practice of principal-cum teachers in schools. Different scholars define the concept case study in various ways and a number of them points towards the same direction. Yin (1984); Schumacher and McMillan (2010) define a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a specific phenomenon within its real-life context and considering multiple sources of evidence. They further claim that it is an approach that involves an in-depth exploration of a single case and the purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of the principal-cum teachers as teachers handling two crucial roles in the school environment. Niewenhuis (2007) further adds and claims that a case study concentrates on a specific case or situation and the investigator studies how the investigated group makes meaning of a phenomenon under investigation. In this study, I wanted to explore the practise experience of principals who are managing schools with a special case which is multi-grade teaching and as a result these principals are also engaged in multi-grade teaching. Therefore, a case study as a design was the suitable design that could help to build a holistic understanding of how participants approach and perceive their practice. This is in line with what Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) claim when they state that a case study is the relevant design which can focus on individuals or a team of actors and seek to understand their perception of events.

I opted for the case study because it enabled me to penetrate the parts of a study which the other designs like conceptual studies and historical research could not reach (Bassey, 1999). Mertens (2010) contends with this claim made and state that the case study is an approach that allows in-depth exploration of the phenomenon under study. The case study allows the participant to work closely with the participants under the study. Geertz (1983 b) cited in Cohen *et al* (2007)

contends that a case study strives to portray what it is like to be in a particular situation by considering participants' lived experiences, thoughts and feelings for the situation. One of the advantages of a case study as mentioned by Bassey (1999) is that it recognizes the complexity and embeddedness of social truths. The intention of the study was to understand some issues around the phenomenon which is multi-grade teaching by school principals and this is the issue happening socially and that is where the data came from.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) a case can be an individual, group, activity or event and it could be a process. In this study I chose the principals of multi-grade schools to be the participants. It is these principals that were studied and provided the analysed data for this study and what they experienced in their practice was the case. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) mention a very pertinent point about the utilization of multiple cases in a single study and that has to be borne in mind. They state that when a number of different cases are combined in a single study, the investigation may be called a collective, multiple, or a multisite study. In this study, I have decided to use the concept multisite case study because this case study was conducted among principals of five schools in different sites but the findings are combined for a single study. This correlates with a definition of a case study by Stake (2008) and Creswell (2008) where they both agree that a case study is an in-depth analysis of a single entity. These principals in this study all shared the similar entity.

A case study method allows the researcher to use multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process (Niewenhuis, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It was a good method because it allowed me to determine in advance as to what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques would be used. This means that in the case study the researcher is always guided during the process because everything is put upfront, prior the commencement of the study. This correlates with the six key stages of a case study as identified by Yin (2009). The six stages are planning, designing, preparing, collecting, analyzing and sharing information. Looking at the claim by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) I reported earlier, that a case study allows determining in advance, I fit this activity in the planning process. In this stage, it is where I put

down all my plans for the study and all the data that I intended to generate for analysing. All the six key stages as mentioned by Yin (2009) are very crucial stages in an effective research journey.

#### ***4.5 Selecting research sites***

The study was conducted in five multi-grade Primary Schools in Ixopo Circuit under Sisonke District in KwaZulu-Natal. The five schools were selected due to their suitability and feasibility to be part and parcel of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). They were small and had multi-grade classes and principals were simultaneously managing schools and also engaged in teaching multi-grade classes. As per the new rule for the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I approached the principals of these schools and requested for the permission to come and conduct the study in schools that they managed. I also sent in a written letter to each of them. All the principals responded in a very positive way and granted me the permission to come and conduct the study in the school that they managed. They also served me with written letters which are the letters that were sent together with HSF 14 (Research Proposal and Ethical Clearance Forms) to the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Offices. The five research sites are discussed in the data analysis Chapter five to provide the reader with the picture and the nature of the school. This will also elicit the rationale of their consideration in this study. The sites are named as Forest Primary School, Wetlands Primary School, Sloppy Primary School, Flats Primary School and Hills Primary School.

#### ***4.6 Sampling of participants***

I targeted a specific group of principals who are engaged in a special case that was studied in the study. Therefore, sampling had to be done carefully. In each school, I needed the principal of the school and one Post Level one teacher that worked with the principal in the same school. The principals were the main participants that were studied and the Post Level one teachers were used for crystallization purpose in the study (Niewenhuis, 2007). The purpose for including the

Post Level one teachers was to get their observations of what they see their supervisors doing in their practice of daily bases in the context of multi-grade school.

In this study, I used non-probability form of sampling to select the five participants. Non-probability sampling is defined as a form of sampling which the researcher uses knowing that the group that s/he works with does not represent the wider population but it represents itself (Cohen et al, 2007; Maree & Pieterse, 2007 and McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). What I applied in the study was purposive sampling where I targeted participants whom I believed would provide me with rich data for the study (Maree & Pieterse, 2007; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 and McMillan & Schumacher 2010). All these scholars agree that in purposive sampling a participant is selected for a certain purpose and s/he is believed to have relevant information for the study. For logistical reasons for data gathering for this study, I chose principals of schools under Ixopo Circuit in the Sisonke District. These schools made my travelling much lesser because they were easily accessible by me. This brings in the element of convenience sampling in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Mertens, 2010). These scholars agree that convenience sampling is when a group of subjects is selected on the basis of being accessible or expedient.

It was understood that the findings that I would get could not be generalized to a wider population but it would only belong specifically to this study. Ixopo Circuit has four administrative wards that function under it. In each of these wards, there are schools that practise multi-grade teaching. Each ward had a school that was part of the study. However, due to the targeted number of principals, one of them ended up having two schools representing it. The majority of these schools in Ixopo are managed by female principals and as a result I managed to get only one male principal to be part of the participants. The letter sent to principal-cum teachers is attached as Appendix 4. Table 4.1 presents the biographical profile of principal-cum teachers involved in the study.



Table 4.1: Biographical profile of principal-cum teachers

Participant	School	Race	Age	No of years teaching	No of years in MG class	MG Grades taught	Qualifications	Post level
P.C.T-1	Bush Primary	African	57	32	5	Gr R-4	J.P.T.D F.D.E	Principal
P.C.T-2	Sloppy Primary	African	53	25	9	Gr 4 & 5	S.P.T.D H.D.E B Ed Honours	Principal
P.C.T-3	Wetlands Primary	African	41	18	18	Gr R-3	J.P.T.D A.C.E	Principal
P.C.T-4	Flats Primary	African	55	31	3	Gr 2 & 3	S.P.T.D H.D.E B Ed Honours	Principal
P.C.T-5	Hills Primary	African	58	35	3	Gr 5 & 6	S.P.T.D H.D.E B.A.	Principal

The data was generated from these participants utilizing a number of data collection techniques. The next section focuses on the data collection methods that were employed in the study.

#### ***4.7 Methods of data generation***

This study was a case study and one of the key strengths of a case study is the use of multiple sources and techniques in the data collection process. According to Denzin and Lincoln, (2003, p. 36) „the case study relies on interviewing, observing and documents review“. In addition to this, Yin (1994) further adds more tools that can be used to collect data in a case study, he cites that they may include document reviews, observations, surveys and the collection of physical artefacts. In line with what Yin (1984) and Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state, in this study, three data collection methods were used. The three data collection methods were Individual Interviews, Focus Group Interviews and Observations. The utilization of these three methods in a single study enhanced validity and trustworthiness of this study. It was also one of the strategies to enhance crystallization (Niewenhuis, 2007).

According to Niewenhuis (2007) a case study is aimed at gaining greater insight and understanding dynamics of a specific situation. In a similar vein, Creswell (2008) also refers to the case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system. The concept in-depth exploration elicits the importance of going deep when exploring or studying the matter that is studied in the case study. On that note, I believe that utilizing one method in this study could not allow one to get deeper in the way that could make the study to have rich data. Hence, in this study, three data collection methods were used.

#### *4.7.1. Individual interviews*

The individual interviews (II) were conducted with two categories of participants. It was conducted with principals and also with Post Level One (PL) teachers. Each group had its own set of semi structured interview questions. The five principals and the five PL 1 teachers were asked their sets of questions separately. The interview as a form of collecting data was very pertinent to the study. Neuwenhuis (2007, p. 87) defines an interview as a “two way conversation in which the interviewer asks participants questions to collect data and to learn about ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of participants”. In line with Niewenhuis (2007); Kvale (1996) shares a similar view and claim that it is an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data. In this study it is believed that the interviews were a suitable method that allowed me to interrogate my participants. Cohen et al (2007) contends that an interview enables the interviewer and interviewee to discuss their interpretation of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011) argue that it is regarded as social relationship designed to exchange information between the participant and the researcher with the purpose of ensuring clarity.

Individual interviews as a data generation strategy and a case study design are compatible when conducting a study based on a claim that “from an interpretivist perspective, the typical characteristic of a case study is that they strive towards a comprehensive understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study”(Niewenhuis, 2007. p. 75). Therefore, from a paradigmatic point of view, the interview was the suitable method for collecting data that could allow me to go deep and investigate the matter holistically. Moreover, qualitative research focuses on describing and understanding phenomena within their naturally occurring context with the purpose of developing understanding through responses provided by respondents (Niewenhuis, 2007).

During the II process there is interaction process taking place between the interviewer and the interviewee and it is believed that it is one of the strategies in which the two parties start getting to know each other and develop confidence. For me as a researcher, it was due to this method that I was able to build a strong proximity with the participants and it enabled me to develop the nature of rapport that was necessary to collect rich data. Niewenhuis (2007) emphasizes to the necessity of the rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. Due to this rapport that had developed between the two parties, I was able to conduct interview probes effectively (Niewenhuis, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Probing included elaboration of details, further explanations and clarification of responses. This is what Atkins and Wallace (2012, p. 86) state about the usage of interviews in the qualitative study; “the opportunity for dialogue which they provide allows the interviewer to probe and clarify and to check that they have understood correctly what is being said”. This is the activity which cannot be achieved by utilizing data collection methods like questionnaires. During interviews, the participants are encouraged to talk all what is in their minds about the research area and that enhance trustworthiness and the value of interpretations.

In as much as we claim that an interview means that a researcher asks someone else questions but we need to acknowledge the fact that interviews are not the same. In this study, semi-

structured questions were asked across all the five principals and five Post Level one teachers in the study. According to Neuman (2000) semi structured interview fit between the questionnaire where there are restrictions to deviate and the evolving interview which has known goals but not necessary any known or expected end points. Neuman (2000) further makes a claim that a semi-structured interview is more invasive than a questionnaire. I made sure that my alignment was the research topic which focused on exploring principals and multi-grade teaching in schools. The questions adhered to the recommendation made by Neuman (2000) about the usage of semi-structured interviews; he claims that semi structured interviews should contain starter questions and guidance and what themes to introduce if the interviewee does not introduce them. From the point of view of data collection, the interview guide is structured to reflect the research questions and collect data on an indicator that can be used to answer the research questions. That is the style that was adopted in the implementation of the semi-structured interviews to generate data.

The semi-structured questions are attached as Appendix 6 for principals and Appendix 7 for PL 1 in this thesis. I need to reiterate this: the aim of the study was to explore the leadership experiences of principals in multi-grading schools, where principals are engaged in managing the schools as well as handling multi-grade classes. The study also aimed to explore coping strategies of these principals. The questions were formulated considering identified problem, rationale of the study as well as the aims of the study. Questions were phrased in a way that interrogated the participants and provoked their thinking and experience sharing about this phenomenon.

I had one session of individual interviews with each principal. The allocated time for each interview session was two hours. However, some of the sessions exceeded the duration and went to three hours due of the issues that arose during the process and clarification process. Each principal was interviewed in the school where s/he worked. They were interviewed in classrooms that they considered as their offices and in one-teacher schools, I had to conduct the interviews after learners had gone home because during the school hours they occupied classrooms. I opted to conduct the interviews in the workplace where the person worked and I believed that it would

be that type of environment where the person works where s/he would be able to remember everything about his/her practice. During the interviews, the focus was on exploring their daily roles, interrogating their experiences in managing multi-grade schools and also handling multi-grade classes. I also focused on understanding the strategies that the principals used to manage their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools.

All the participants granted me permission to tape record them. They had signed the consent to be audio taped during the interviewing process. The Declaration by participant form is attached as Appendix 5 in this thesis. Utilising the tape recorder to tape record the interviews contributed to the enhancement of validity during the study (Cohen *et al*, 2007). Atkins and Wallace (2012) state a number of advantages of utilizing the audio tape recorder during the interviews. They claim that utilizing the audio tape allows the capturing of the entire interview and allows careful review of data and it makes a complete transcription of data and that really happened during the data collection process in this study as well. After the transcription process, the transcripts were given to the five principals who were main participants and five PL 1 teachers who were also participants for them to check if what was transcribed reflects authentically what they meant. This was a very beneficial process because more information came up as they clarified their responses and that added more data. The participants' addition of data really contributed to the deepening and enrichment of the data that was to be analysed.

#### *4.7.2. Focus Group Interviews*

The second data generation method I used was the focus group interviews. The purpose of employing the focus group interviews (FGI) was to gather all the principals of sampled schools together to discuss some crucial issues and share their experiences around the research topic. This correlates with the definition of a focus group interview as defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) when they refer to it as an involvement of a small homogeneous group gathered to study together an issue affecting them. The focus group interview was the last method to be applied. The focus group interviews contributed positively in the research study because they offered participants the opportunity to raise issues that they had forgotten during

the individual interviews. This correlates with what Niewenhuis (2007) states where he claims that the focus group interview contributes to activate forgotten details. During the focus group interviews, the participants were able to build on each other's ideas, thoughts and comments and this provided in-depth views around the issues that were discussed. Neuman (2000) resonates and suggests that discussions should flow to allow issues and perspectives to emerge and to be discussed. It also brought up data that was not attainable from individual interviews.

During the focus group interviews, the participants were asked a set of semi structured questions. The focus was on interrogating the principal-cum teachers' experiences with regard to leadership and management of multi-grade schools coupled with multi-grade class teaching. I also intended to explore their coping techniques of managing these schools. The participants got the opportunity to debate over those issues that came up. Cohen *et al* (2007, p. 376) view focus group in this way and they emphasise its importance: "the participants interact with each other rather than the interviewer such that the views of the participants can emerge - the participants' rather than the researcher's agenda can predominate". What Cohen *et al* (2007) state resonates with the assumption by Krueger and Casey, as cited in Mertens (2010, p. 240), they claim that "focus groups, in essence, are groups that rely, not on a question-and-answer format of interview, but on the interaction within the group". They further state that this reliance on interaction between participants is designed to elicit more of the participants' point of view than would be evidenced in more researcher-dominated interviewing. This process enabled me the opportunities to collect a lot of rich data during their discussions around the matter studied and their personal experiences. The focus group interview allowed the exhibition of a struggle for understanding the situation they were involved in as well as their coping strategies. It was a good exercise of listening to their agreements and disagreements with the issues raised and the way they tried to build consensus. The set of focus group interview questions is attached as Appendix 8 in the thesis.

The process of getting all the five principals together for the focus group interview was not an easy assignment due to the fact that each of them had his/her respective schools' demands which

always clashed with my arranged time for the focus group interviews. The focus group interview was only effective on the fourth set date. During our gathering, I focused on the recommendation that Niewenhuis (2007, p. 91) makes in the implementation the focus group interviews as a data collection method; he cites that researchers must “encourage full participation and interaction among members and also use probing to steer the discussions or to clarify aspects, but try to remain in the background”. I made sure that before the focus group interviews commenced, I eased the tension with the participants and together we had an exercise of knowing each other so that each of us could express himself/herself freely. This is one of the suggestions that Neuman (2000, p. 351) makes in the implementation of the focus group interview as a data collection method; he states that “the location and the setting should be one where everyone feels comfortable”. He further states that it is the moderator’s role to set the tone and the atmosphere during the focus group interviews. I created a conducive atmosphere in which group members were stimulated by one another’s perceptions and ideas. Collegially, we set ground rules and amongst them, we agreed that we would respect the speaker on the floor, giving him/her enough time to speak and ensuring that we had one meeting in our gathering.

The focus group interview took place at an appropriate venue that we had agreed upon, which was the circuit office. I opted for the circuit office because that is where all the principals meet when they go for submissions. It was convenient for all of them to reach the circuit office. The principals met twice for the focus group interviews. Each session lasted three hours and there was a lot of information sharing taking place. As with the individual interviews, at this stage, during the focus group interviews, I used the tape recorder to record the focus group interviews. I also made notes of their physical gestures, expressions and body language during the process. Immediately, after the focus group interview, I transcribed the data. After transcription, I handed to each participant a transcript with his/her words during the interview to go over it so that s/he could comment or add more information on the data. This was also another problem due to the geographical positions of the school. This cost me a lot of travelling to deliver the transcripts to all the schools. However, this was absolutely beneficial for the study because the transcripts came back with a lot of information added by the participants.

However, the focus group interview as a data generation method has some limitations that had to be taken into consideration to avoid unnecessary obstacles along the process. Niewenhuis (2007, p. 91) asserts that some participants may experience focus group interview as a threatening process for those participants that are shy or not public speakers. He further states that the information collected may sometimes be biased through group processes such as discussions being dominated by the more outspoken individuals, group thinking and the difficulty that may be encountered of assessing the opinions of the less assertive participants. Arksey and Knight (1999) alerts that having more than one interviewee can make one interviewee complement another one. It was explained that each participant's voice and opinion was important in the study. The possible impediments that have been explained above were not experienced in this study because all the role players embarked on it after having been part of setting ground rules in advance and the purpose vividly explained to them.

The process of conducting individual interviews and focus group interviews with the participants provided me with very rich data. Moreover, that was the data that one could rely on because it was the data that came directly from the participants. However, there was a need to apply another form of data collection to enhance triangulation in the study. Therefore, in the study, one decided to also consider observations as one of the methods of collecting data. Hence, the next section focuses on observation as data collection method employed in the study.

#### ***4.7.3. Observations***

Observation as a data generation method is a way that assists the researcher to see and hear what is occurring naturally in the research site (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is a method used to record non-verbal behaviour, behaviour in natural or contrived setting and longitudinal analysis (Bailey, 1994). Niewenhuis (2007) argues that observation allows the researcher to learn through personal experience and reflection which is part of interim data analysis. It also helps the researcher to understand how the setting is socially constructed in terms of his/her specific focus of study. In this study, the main focus was on leadership experiences of principals that were engaged in multi-grade teaching in their schools. It was regarded as one of the very crucial



methods of data generation to ensure triangulation and enriching data that was generated through the different forms of interviews employed in the study.

Observation strategy that was employed in the study was the non-participant observation (Leedy & Omrod, 2001; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). There are various terms that different scholars use to refer to this method, Niewenhuis (2007) refers to this method as complete observation and Adler and Adler (1994) use the term non-interventionism observation. This is the observation method in which the researcher observes the situation from a distance and does not involve himself/herself in the situation. As a researcher, I made sure that I did not manipulate the situation or subjects and I did not pose any questions for the subjects. I made sure that there were no new provocations that took place. This is the method that is least obstructive to the participants and to the setting but it focuses to the phenomenon under study. Through observations, the qualitative researcher aims to catch the dynamic nature of events, to see intentionality, to seek trends and pattern over time. This is what Jegede (1999) state to define non-participant observation as a data collection strategy. He contends:

“This is the type of observation in which the observer stands at a distance from the observed. He does not participate in the activities involving the observed but rather records the characteristics displayed by those that are interest of him. In this case however, he must be careful not to allow the observed to become aware of his intent so as to control effect of change of behaviour” (Jegede, 1999, p. 136).

I adopted this form of observation because it allowed me to closely document each participant’s behaviour and dynamics in the setting. Being a non-participant observer, gave me enough time to observe all what I wanted to observe and record. Choosing the non-participation observation method did not make me to be involved in the situation and I believed it was least obstructive. I opted for this method based on the point made by Niewenhuis (2007, p. 86) where he states “the more involved you get with the situation being observed, the higher the risk that you will become too subjectively involved and will let your biases get the better of you”. I used an observation schedule which is Appendix 9 in this document to record my observations in the whole process.

The observation schedule was designed by myself as a researcher taking into consideration the key focus areas that I wanted to observe. I also kept a separate journal where I recorded my personal observations to elaborate the content of the grid or the schedule that was used. I used these two recording instruments in this category because I wanted to enhance validity of the data. According to Leedy and Omrod (2001), the researcher must make sure that s/he takes field notes as much as s/he can. The field notes were dated and the contexts were identified explicitly to avoid complexity. Each principal was observed in his/her school where s/he worked. It was imperative for me to observe them in their schools because it is where they practised and the focus was on their practice experiences. In each school, I spent three sessions for observations. During this period I observed actions of principal-cum teachers in practice. I observed occurrence patterns of incidents and ensured that recording took place accurately.

The assurance of trustworthiness in the observation process is very important, as a result in the process, I adhered to the recommendation that can be employed recommended by Niewenhuis (2007) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010) which is member checking. This is the process whereby all the observations are verified with the observed members. This is the process which enabled them as the observed members to explain their behaviour during observations. It also enabled me as a researcher the opportunity to request them to confirm my observations and they were allowed to elaborate or request for elaborations where it was not clear.

Observation as a data generation method has its own limitations. Leedy and Omrod (2001) argue that one of the disadvantages of observation is that the presence of the observer may influence what the participants say or do and how significant events may unfold. What I did is that I explained to all the participants that the intention was to get ontological and epistemological aspects of the matter under study and it was important for them to demonstrate the reality so that it could be observed (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). School leadership together with multi-grade teaching by principals is a serious matter that needs to be understood as to how the two are performed concurrently. Therefore they were told how important it was for them to show the genuine nature of reality. Another disadvantage by Leedy and Omrod (2001) is that observers

often write insufficient notes of what they have observed and so they do not completely reflect the reality. As a researcher, I ensured that I maintained objectivity when writing field notes.

#### ***4.8 Data generation procedures***

As stated earlier in this chapter, during data generation, the first form of generating data conducted was the individual interviews with the principals of schools and PL 1 teachers. I used the tape recorder to record their responses during the process. I decided to start with individual interviews because it is where I believed I would be able to get exactly how each person personally experienced being in this practice. After, the individual interviews were completed, I then embarked on the observation process. During observations, I used an observation schedule to record my observations in the whole process. The schedule contained all the key points and areas that I had to observe. I also had a separate journal where I recorded my personal observations to elaborate the content of the grid or schedule that I used. The last method applied was the focus group interviews. I decided to make this the last one because it would be when I had visited them around in their schools and have had some information pertaining to their engagement. It would also allow me to probe for more information arising from what I would have observed or picked up during the individual interviews. During the focus group interviews, I also used the tape recorder to record the interview process. This allowed me to get all their words that I could miss if I had to write their responses during the interviews.

#### ***4.9 Procedure for gaining acceptance***

I ensured that all the procedures were followed correctly to gain access to conduct the study in the educational institutions under the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Borg and Gail (1989) emphasize that when working with any administrative hierarchy, such as a school district, it is crucial to follow appropriate channels of authority. This is in line with what Mertens (2010) states, that the researcher must follow appropriate procedures to gain permission from the gatekeepers. The new rule for the University of KwaZulu-Natal is that when a candidate that intends to conduct a study applies for ethical clearance, s/he has to attach letters from the

institutions where s/he intends to conduct the study granting her/him the permission to come and conduct the study. I followed the same procedure and the five school principals furnished me with the letters that were attached to form HSF 14 sent to ethics offices for the university. The ethical clearance letter from the university is also attached as Appendix 3, the approval letter with Protocol Reference number HSS/1209/013D.

It was also necessary for me to obtain the official permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. This was facilitated by a written letter to the Department of Education requesting for permission to conduct the study. The letter is attached as appendix 2. The letter was also supported by a prescribed form which is titled as „Application for Permission to Conduct Research in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions’. This form enables the applicant the opportunity to give a brief narrative about the study that s/he intends to conduct. These documents were submitted to KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education head office in Pietermaritzburg. The permission letter is attached as Appendix 1.

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

##### *4.10.1 Protection of human dignity*

When a study is conducted, it is done in a particular site with participants who have human dignity that has to be protected. It is therefore one of key assignments to consider the ethics during the study. When I conducted the study, a point raised by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) was considered; they claim that when a researcher conducts a research, it is difficult to separate research ethics from professional ethics and personal morality. During the study, I made sure that I behaved professionally as a researcher and it was borne in mind that participants were also entitled to protection of their human dignity. Since the study was conducted in the context of South Africa, where citizens are protected by the Bill of Rights, being part of the highest law of the land, the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, I made sure that the lawful protocol to protect human dignity was followed. This section discusses the ethical procedures followed during the study. In some parts of the discussion, there will be reiteration because some of the

issues have been hinted previously. However, it is imperative for them to be discussed in this section because they will be discussed comprehensively.

#### *4.10.2. Informed consent*

It is imperative for the participants to sign in the consent forms before they engage themselves in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I made sure that after obtaining the permission to conduct the study from principals of schools, I provided them with informed consent forms that were attached to the letter that contained full details about the study. I adhered to the principles of informed consent as a precondition for participation as spelt out by Allmark (2002). Allmark states that the consent should be given by someone competent to do so; the person giving the consent should be adequately informed and the consent should be given voluntarily. The informed consent letter and the forms were for the principals of schools as well as the PL 1 teachers included in the study. I made sure that when I designed the letters to the participants, I considered the informational points by McMillan and Schumacher (2010)) that should be included in a consent form. The letter contained full description of the nature of the study and participants were provided with contact details for all involved in the study so they could contact for elaboration and clarification purposes. In the informed consent form, there was a provision where they had to state whether they gave consent or not for the interviews to be tape recorded. It was clearly stated in the letter that participation in the study was voluntarily and could not be compelled, coerced or required to participate. After reading the letter, all the participants sent back their informed consent forms with their full names and signatures as a sign that they understood and accepted and offered themselves to be part of the study. The signed consent forms are kept separately from the result of the study.

#### *4.10.3. Assurance of non-maleficence and beneficence*

I considered the issues of non-maleficence, beneficence and human dignity in research as expressed by Durhein and Wessenaar (2001). The participants were assured that the study had no harm to them personally as well as to their practice as teachers in schools. I had to produce the

letter that I sent to the KZN Department of Education, requesting the permission to conduct the study with the schools. I also made sure that I expressed myself very well to them about the beneficence of the study. The purpose of the study was to explore the involved principals' experiences in leading small schools and also engaged in multi-grade teaching. This is a very serious issue that I believed, after the study, those who are involved in policy formulation can consider their situation and design policies that suits their context. The participants were assured that their human dignity would be respected throughout the research process. They were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time should they felt that they were uncomfortable by being part of the study. It was very crucial for me to discuss these three factors in research which are beneficence, non-maleficence and human dignity.

#### *4.10.4. Confidentiality and anonymity*

The participants were assured of privacy throughout the study. I considered the three practices as forms of assuring privacy. The three forms during the process were anonymity, confidentiality and appropriate storing of data (Cohen *et al*, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To ensure anonymity, I used the pseudonyms during the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) and this assured the participants non-identifiability and non-traceability. Participants were assured that no one else could access the data collected except the researcher. They were made certain that data could not be linked to individual subjects by name. In line with this, Cohen *et al* (2007) make a recommendation in case there is a circumstance to violate anonymity, they state that any violation of it should be made with the agreement of the participants. All the collected data, either on a hard copy or electronically was kept in a lockable safe. This included the audiotapes utilized during the process. This was to ensure that nobody could access the data illegally because that could impact negatively on the study. Luders (2004b) as cited in Flicks (2006) states that it is important that a researcher stores the data recordings and transcripts in a safe, completely secure container, so that no one will be able to access these data who is not meant to. Participants were assured of non-betrayal during the study (Cohen *et al*, 2007). They were assured that the disclosed sensitive data cannot be revealed publicly in such a way to cause embarrassment, anxiety or any type of suffering to the subjects.

#### ***4.10.5. Risks in the study***

The study consisted of principals as the main participants in the study as well as the PL 1 teachers that were working with these principals. As a researcher I made sure that I gave my participants assurance that whatever they divulged at their level during the interviews could not be disclosed to the other group at its level. This could spoil relationship between these two people in the school which is the principal of the school and the teacher that s/he worked with. Neuman (2000) stresses that researchers must avoid situations that create social exclusion and tensions amongst the participants. The emphasis made is that researchers need to avoid constituting circumstances where the confidence can be broken.

The collected data, that includes transcripts and the tape recorded data will be kept in the university to avoid any unnecessary leaks which might occur and this is compliant to the Data Protection Act of 1984.

#### ***4.11 Data analysis***

The process of data analysis in research is very crucial step because it bears the major effect of the real essence of the study. According to Cohen *et al* (2007) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010) qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories. In this study, a design for data analysis by McMillan and Shumacher (2010) was used during the analysis process. This is a pattern that they refer to as the General Process of Inductive Data Analysis. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) inductive analysis is the process through which qualitative researchers synthesize and make meaning from the data, starting with specific data on hand and ending with categories and patterns. They further cite that in this way of analyzing data, more general themes and conclusions emerge from the data rather than being imposed prior to data collection. The emphasis is on the raw data that the researcher collects from the participants during field work and it forms the base of everything in inductive data analysis.

The very first activity that was done after completing the process of collecting data was engaging in transcription for interviews. This is very critical in the research process because it is part of what produces authentic raw data for the study. The transcription was done by myself.

Niewenhuis (2007) recommends the transcription to be done by the person who employed that strategy; he cites that the researcher most probably includes some non-verbal cues in the transcription which the person that was not there cannot do. The physical gestures play an important role in the qualitative study particularly if the researcher operates in the interpretive paradigm because they are also considered for interpretation. The typed data was saved on the computer and there was also another hard copy printed out and saved in the file.

After completing the transcription process, I embarked on the data reduction process. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data from transcript. This was done by reading and listening to the prescribed data for several times. During this exercise, I also engaged myself in memoing, which is writing down impressions that the researcher develops as s/he goes through the data (Niewenhuis, 2007). According to Niewenhuis (2007), memoing is a reflective journal in which a researcher records the ideas and insights gained as s/he move through the research process and in the end it provides him/her with additional data resource to be analysed. It was during this process when I engaged myself in the coding of the data. This is the process where I started taking note of the words, sentences and a few lines of text that could be considered as segments. Segments inform the process of qualitative data analysis because they are texts that carry similar or related responses and contain one idea, episodes or piece of relevant information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The segments were then analyzed to come up with codes so that each segment was labelled by one code. The codes were created and utilized to provide meaning to the segments. This was blended with the findings of my observations during fieldwork.

After completing the process of coding the data, I then moved to creating categories for the codes that had been created. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define categories as entities comprised of grouped codes. During the data categorizing process, it was borne in mind that



codes that contain similar meaning be put together. The next activity after categorizing the codes was to search for emerging patterns, regular concepts and proper explanation in the data. This is the stage where I defined the concepts, mapping the nature of phenomena, created typologies and attempted to find associations with the data to provide explanations. Niewenhuis (2007, p. 112) advises that, “whatever emerges from your data will guide you through this process and will constitute the framework through which you will construct new meaning and understanding”. This is the level in which I had to produce proper analysis of the data generated during field work.

During the data analysis process, particularly in the coding and categorising process, the focus was given to the research questions and the purpose of the study. The codes, themes, segments and categories were created bearing in mind the rationale of the study supported by the research questions to understand the phenomenon. The main purpose was to explore leadership experiences of principals that are engaged simultaneously in school management and multi-grade teaching in schools that they managed. Therefore the research questions were used to develop understanding of this practice and the different codes and categories emerged from them.

#### ***4.12 Strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness in the study***

In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is of utmost importance (Niewenhuis, 2007). He further cites that it is the acid test of the data analysis, findings and conclusions. Niewenhuis states that trustworthiness is the element of encompassing validity and reliability. Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) include issues of credibility, applicability, dependability and confirmability. They cite that these are key criteria of trustworthiness and these are constructed to parallel the conventional criteria of inquiry of internal and external validity and neutrality respectively. There were various procedures that were employed to enhance or ensure trustworthiness during the research process. This section discusses the strategies to ensure trustworthiness employed in the study.

#### *4.12.1. Multi-method of gathering data*

One of the strategies for enhancing trustworthiness recommended by Niewenhuis (2007) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010) is the use of multi-method strategy. During the data generation period, I utilized three data collection methods which is in-depth individual interviews, focus group interviews and observations. Multi-methods utilization in the study permits crystallization (Niewenhuis, 2007). Hodder cited in Lincoln and Guba (1985) advises the researchers to consider multiple and conflicting voices, differing and interacting interpretations to facilitate triangulation. The utilization of these three methods was to test if the data obtained through their utilization did point to the same conclusions and also to check how they took different directions. In this study, the post level one teachers that worked with these principals were also considered as participants and according to Niewenhuis (2007) using multiple data sources is one of the strategies to enhance validity and reliability in a study.

#### *4.12.2. The tape recording process during data collection process*

All the in-depth individual interviews and the focus group interviews conducted during the data collection phase were mechanically recorded with a tape recorder. This is the activity which is recommended because it is believed that it provides accurate and relatively complete records (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This allowed me to acquire all the words during the interviews which could be very difficult if it were not recorded interviews. During the transcription process, all the words were from the tape. All the entries were done scrupulously and precisely to ensure validity.

#### *4.12.3. Prolonged and persistent engagement by the researcher*

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Lincoln (2009) propose a criterion for quality in qualitative research that include the deep and close involvement of researchers in the community of interest. They also claim that sufficient distance from the phenomenon under study allows accurate recording of observed actions. As a researcher I ensured that I spent enough time in the sites where the study was conducted, as indicated earlier in this chapter. I had arranged with the

schools that they would allow me to come at any time after 13H00 for data generation. Mertens (2010) claims that spending sufficient time in the field avoids premature closure which is reaching conclusions that are erroneous based on limited exposure to the phenomenon. In each site, I spent three sessions for observations to ensure that most of the pertinent activities were observed for recording. In the sites, I stayed for a longer period of time and that helped me to observe when themes and examples were extending and not repeating.

#### *4.12.4. Member checking*

During the data collection process, after the completion of interviewing, the participants were furnished with the transcripts and the field notes for checking and correcting the errors of facts (Niewenhuis, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This is the process described as an interactive process between the researcher, the researched and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a relatively higher level of accuracy and consensus. This was done by revisiting facts, feelings, experiences and values collected. This was the same case with the observations, the participants were asked to verify whether the researcher's interpretations of observations were correct. In areas where I had wrongly interpreted they provided me with the correct interpretation. However, these were rare incidents in the whole process and most of the time they supported and agreed with my interpretations. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) cite that the use of participants' language and verbatim accounts enhance validity. In this study, I ensured that the questions were phrased in the language that the participants understood clearly to avoid misunderstanding between the interviewee and the interviewer. When as a researcher I had to use quotes, I did direct quotes of the real words from the transcription and those were the direct words from the participants. All this made the verification process to run smoothly and quickly because it was the stuff they knew.

#### *4.12.5. Control of bias, confidentiality and anonymity*

I ensured a proper control for bias as recommended by Niewenhuis (2007). I ensured that there was no extreme involvement with the research participants and with the study. I made sure that

the role of a researcher was played fruitfully because unnecessary involvement could lead to unnecessary and unhealthy influence to the whole research process particularly with the collected data as well as its analysis. The participants were provided with copies of draft report and they were asked for written and oral comments on the report. The process of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity was also considered as one of the strategies to enhance validity. Niewenhuis (2007) recommends the use of pseudonyms in a manner that does not expose participants; their identities are well protected in the report. Pseudonyms are used in the study and participants are not called by names and even their schools are not called by their real names.

#### ***4.13 Limitations and challenges of the study***

The study was conducted only with the principals of primary schools and only five schools were considered in the study. Therefore, the findings are findings only relevant to the information gathered during the study process and only from those principals; the findings cannot be generalized. Niewenhuis (2007) supports the case study as a design by claiming that in the case study the focus is on what is unique about individuals, groups, situation or an issue. He concludes by contending that the ultimate aim of the researcher is to seek insight into participants' perspectives, experiences, attitudes and behaviours in that particular case.

The key strength of a qualitative study is that the emphasis is on how rigorous the interviews are and the uniqueness of the cases. Each case has its own features which are important and that is not generalized. Each case contains certain lessons to be learnt. Another crucial point is, even though it is believed that this study represents the small population, it unclothes the leadership experiences of the group of principals under study in a specific special type of selected unfamiliar practice. Their coping strategies of handling both school management and teaching multi-grade classes are learnt. That might be beneficence even to other principals in similar situations.

#### ***4.14. Conclusion***

In this chapter, methodology employed in the whole study has been discussed. Procedures followed to get access to schools have been discussed. Strategies of ensuring trustworthiness have also been discussed. The next section begins to present and analyse the data generated during the data generation phase.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ROLES, CHALLENGES AND EMOTIONS OF PRINCIPAL-CUM TEACHERS

#### *5.1. Introduction*

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methodology of this study. This chapter focuses on presentation and discussion of data for the first research question. In this chapter, I first start by presenting the sources of data to the reader before getting to the gist before embarking on data analysis. This is the chapter where I reflect on how I made sense of the data generated considering literature review and the theoretical framework as it has been illuminated in the preceding chapters, i.e. one, two and three. This chapter focuses on the principal-cum teachers' daily roles as principals of schools and multi-grade class teachers in the context of multi-grade schools. It further considers how the principal-cum teachers experience their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools. To begin the analysis process, I find it imperative to refer back to the critical research questions that shaped the study before I present and discuss the data. The questions are as follows:

#### **5.2.**

##### *Research questions*

- (i) What are the daily roles of principal-cum teachers and how they experience their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools?
- (ii) How do the principal-cum teachers seek to lead and manage their roles?
- (iii) What can we learn from the principal-cum teachers regarding ways of better leading and managing multi-grade schools?

#### *5.3. Sources of data*

The data that is presented was generated from the five principals in the five selected research sites. In each research site, the principal-cum teacher was sampled as the main person under

study and most of the data that is presented was acquired from them. In the implementation of the individual interview as the data collection strategy, in each school, the principal-cum teacher was interviewed and for triangulation purposes, another individual interview was also conducted separately with one PL one teacher working in the school. In the implementation of the focus group interviews, only the principals were considered for it and during the observations, only the principals were under observation. Table 5.1 portrays sites, participants and data generation method employed with each participant.

### 5.1 Participants and data generation methods

School	Participant	Data Generation Method		
		Individual interviews	Focus Group interviews	Observations
Forest P School	PCT 1	✓	✓	✓
	Ms Shirley (PL1)	✓		
Wetlands P School	PCT 2	✓	✓	✓
	Ms Tiny (PL1)	✓		
Sloppy P School	PCT 3	✓	✓	✓
	Ms Fatty (PL1)	✓		
Flats P School	PCT 4	✓	✓	✓
	Ms White (PL1)	✓		
Hills P School	PCT 5	✓	✓	✓
	Ms Dan (PL1)	✓		

## Key

PCT- Principal-cum teacher

PL 1- Post Level one

All the participants were permanently appointed in substantive principalship positions in the schools that they managed. What varied was the size of schools they managed and their experiences of services in the situation in which they were enmeshed. It is in this section where I begin to introduce my participants to the readers.

Different acronyms are used in this chapter during the data presentation process. The names that are used to refer to them in the study developed from the title of the study. The principals under study are always referred to as principal-cum teachers; therefore I decided to follow the same trend in the data presentation chapters and they are referred to as principal-cum teachers (PCT). Table 5.2 illustrates the acronyms as used in data presentation.

Table 5.2: Principals participating

<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>Acronym</b>
Principal-cum teacher 1	PCT-1
Principal-cum teacher 2	PCT-2
Principal-cum teacher 3	PCT-3
Principal-cum teacher 4	PCT-4
Principal-cum teacher 5	PCT-5



In this section, during the presentation and discussion of the data, I cite verbatim responses of the principal-cum teachers and the post level one teachers involved in the study. The intention for this is to present analysis with defensible and sound arguments substantiated with real words from the participants. This is in line with what McMillan and Schumacher (2010) cite about qualitative research that the qualitative study strives to explore the lived experiences of participants through their voices and observations. I therefore believe that considering their voices will strengthen the discussions and brightens the picture of the situation in which the principal-cum teachers are enmeshed. The next section presents the sites where the principal-cum teachers worked.

#### **5.4. Research sites**

##### *5.4.1. Research site 1 (Forest Primary School)*

One of the research sites where the study was conducted was Forest Primary School. The school is situated deep in the Forestation area which is 25 kilometres away from the nearest town. In order to get to the school, you have to drive for 13 kilometres on a gravel road where there are no houses. In the area where the school is built there are only two families staying next to the school. Other 25 families stay in a settlement which is 2 kilometres away from the school on the other side. This school serves only those 27 families. According to the principal, the surrounding community and catchment area for the school is characterized by a very high rate of unemployment and poverty. The few parents that were working were employed in the plantations. The majority of the learners survived from grants by the Department of Social Development (DSD) either as a child support grant (CSG) or old age grant.

The school was a two-teacher Primary School and during the period of the study there were 47 learners on the learners' roll. This school offered a full cycle of the primary school which means it started from Grade R up to Grade 7. The only Post Level One female teacher who was at the school taught the higher grades which was Grade 4 to Grade 7 and the Principal-cum teacher was responsible for the lower grades which was Grade R to Grade 3; the number of learners in her multi-grade class was 24. The school offered all the subjects in the Foundation Phase as

prescribed by the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (NCAPS) and the medium of instruction was IsiZulu. Similarly, in the Intermediate and Senior Phase, it offered all the prescribed subjects and the medium of instruction was English.

Even though the school was in the forestation but there was no security guard employed to ensure safety and security for all the resources in the school. The school was a non-fee paying school and in terms of the funding from the Department of Education, it was section 21 school that has full status. According to the Norms and Standards for funding of school in South Africa, if a school has this status, it means all the money for the Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) and Non-Learner Teacher Support Material (NLTSM) is deposited to the school's bank account and the school performs all the procurement functions. Its Quintile ranking was 2. This is determined by a number of factors which could be geographical situation, the distance of the school from the nearby towns as well as the economic status of the community. The school was benefiting from the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP); this means that there was feeding of learners by the funds from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

In terms of infrastructure, the school had only one block of five classrooms. All the classrooms were in a very poor condition even though they were electrified. All the doors were ununlockable, the window panes were broken and the ceiling was hanging over the learners as they sat in the classrooms. During the time of study, only two classrooms were used for teaching and learning purpose, the other three were not utilized. One of the classrooms was used as an office and a store room. There were signs that there had been a couple of burglary incidents in the school. The door handle was broken; the burglar guard could not close properly and next to the handles in every window there was a hole if the window pane was not broken at all. The photocopier that they used was kept in one of the corners and they declared that they had accepted that they shared it with the community which came to make copies illegally after they had gone in the afternoons. The school was surrounded by fence but it was in a very poor condition and there were illegally opened entrance and exit points which made access of the community

uncontrollable on the site. There was no form of sports facilities on site where learners could go and enjoy sports activities.

#### ***5.4.2. Research site 2, (Sloppy Primary School)***

Another school where I generated data was Sloppy Primary School. It was situated in a dairy farm. This farm is 50 kilometres from the nearest town which is also 20 kilometres away from the Circuit Management Centre (CMC) where all submissions and correspondences are made. This school is 70 kilometres away from the CMC which is the distance that the principal has to travel if she has an official assignment with it. In order to get to the school, you have to travel for 16 kilometres on gravel road before you reach it. According to the information provided to me by the principal, there were 24 families consisting of two surnames, living in this farm. Most of the learners in this farm stayed with the grandparents because their parents were working in cities like Pietermaritzburg and Durban and they only came home once a month.

This school was a three-teacher school and there were only two classrooms during the data generation period. The classrooms were in two different sites - one classroom was in the old school site which they had decided to leave and move to the new site and the second classroom which was a park home was on the new site which is 400 metres away from the old school site. The land where the old school was built was too slopy and the land for the new site was a flat level ground and I was told that that was the reason for them to change sites. The classroom in the old site was electrified even though electricity was not working because they had failed to pay for their electricity bill and the electricity service provider disconnected the power. Half of the window panes were broken and the door lock was not functioning and the learners had to put desks behind the door when they went home to enhance security and they had to come out through the window. The school was fenced with barbed wire which was in a very poor condition and community people could move freely in and out of school even if the gate was closed. The park home classroom in the second site looked very neat and had everything in a good condition but there was no electricity. It was properly fenced and there was a jungle gym outside. I was told that this classroom was supplied to them by the KwaZulu-Natal Department

of Education as a Grade R classroom and they decided to erect it on this site because of the movement that they were planning.

The school offered Grade R to Grade 5 on the two school sites. In the old school site, one teacher was responsible for Grades 1 to 3 whilst in the new school site the principal-cum teacher was responsible for Grades 4 and 5. The third teacher was a Grade R teacher who also occupied one of the corners with her Grade R learners. The total enrolment figure for this school was 38. The distribution of learners was 9 in Grade R class that was handled by the Grade R practitioner, 14 for Grade 1 to 3 which was handled by PL 1 teacher and 15 learners for Grade 4 to 5 which was a multi-grade class handled by the principal-cum teacher. Similarly, this school offered all the approved subjects as per the prescripts of the NCAPS. The medium of instruction in this school in the Foundation Phase was IsiZulu and in the Intermediate Phase was English. The school had no state paid security guard, no administration clerk and no state paid cleaner.

The school was a non-fee paying school and it only survived through the grant by the Department of Education which is calculated by the number of learners enrolled in the school. This is captured electronically through the programme of collecting information from schools known as South African- Schools Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS). I was told that the funds restricted them to perform other duties in the school because the money that they received was insufficient and that was the main cause the school lights were disconnected by the service provider. The school was a section 21 school without function C. In the South African context, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, the Norms and Standards for funding of schools stipulates four functions which schools can perform on their own. Function C, particularly focuses on the Learner Teacher Support Material. Function C is the authority granted by the Department of Education to a school to purchase its LTSM. If the school has been granted the right to perform this function, it means its funds for LTSM is deposited directly into the school bank account and the school is allowed to conduct the procurement process following the just and fair procedures as promulgated by the PFMA 1 of 1999. Having said that this school did not perform Function C, its funds for LTSM were kept by the Department of Education and could

only place orders through the Departmental Appointed Agent which would then supply them with the resources as per their order. The school did not have a photocopier and they only relied on the neighbouring school which was 15 kilometres away for copies. Most of the important school's documents were kept in the principal's car, who travelled with them to her home daily and they insisted it was the safest thing they could do. In the classrooms there were corner libraries where they kept all the textbooks that they had. The school benefitted from the National School Nutrition Programme. Since the school was built nearby the dairy farm, the dairy owner gave them maas twice a month to supplement the supply from the Department of Education.

#### *5.4.3. Research site 3 (Wetlands Primary School)*

Another school was Wetlands Primary School. The school was situated in a livestock and crop farm. It is 59 kilometres away from the nearest town which is also 20 kilometres away from the Circuit Management Centre. In order to get to the school, you travel for about 24 kilometres on a gravel road and the access road that leads you towards the school is in a poor condition. Before you get to school you travel through the mielie-land, for which you have to get the permission from the farm owner before you drive through. The surface of the land where the car drives is very muddy since the whole area is a wetland. In this area it was unlike in Sloppy Primary where the school was built within the settlement; with this one there was no home that you could see from the school and the only house that could be seen which was next to the school was the farmer's house. As a result, the principal did not have any idea as to how many families provided the school with the learners stayed in the area. The information that she gave was that most of them stayed with their parents who worked on the farm where the school was built.

Wetlands Primary School was a two-teacher school which offered education for learners in Grade R up to Grade 4. The school also offered all the subjects that are offered in the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase. In this school, the only PL one teacher that worked there was a newly appointed educator who was still coming from the university and the principal-cum teacher gave her Grade R and 4 to teach. There were only 2 learners in Grade 4 and 4 learners in Grade R. The principal-cum teacher was responsible for Grade 1 to 3 and there were 14 learners

in her class. Therefore the total enrolment figure for the learners in the school was 20. In this school there was no state paid security guard, no administration clerk and no grounds man.

In this school, there was only one classroom where all the five grades were taught. The classroom was electrified and it was working. The roof was loose and not properly attached with the wall which also required maintenance. The door could not be locked and 65 % of the window panes were broken and the room was over-ventilated. The five grades shared one chalkboard; however there were other two portable boards that were used by other learners whenever the teacher felt that she should take another grade outside. That one classroom was fenced with a lockable gate even though the area was too small. It was enough for the classrooms and the toilets only and there was no playing zone for learners. All around the school it was full of mielies; it was a private property.

The school was also a section 21 institution without function C, all the funds for the LTSM was kept by the Department of Education and they conducted procurement procedures via the agent when they wanted stationery and textbooks (LTSM). There was evidence of textbooks purchased as seen through the unlockable steel cupboards where they kept their material. All the learners had stationery as well as the workbooks that were supplied by the National Department of Basic Education. The school did not have a photocopier to make copies and the only one computer that they had was kept on another farm by Mrs X, who was a farm owner of another farm since the owner of the farm where the school was did not want to keep their computer. According to the information received from the principal, the current farmer who owned the farm where the school was situated did not want the school on the farm; he insisted it should move away and that is the reason there was no good relationship between the land owner and the school. The school benefited from the National School Nutrition Programme; however, at the time of data generation there was no cook who prepared food for the learners and the teachers had to take turns in preparing meals for the learners.

#### 5.4.4. *Research site 4. (Flats Primary School)*

Another site was Flats Primary School. The school was situated on a very sandy flat area in the deep rural area. The area where the school was built had a very high population; however, in this part of the area where the school was built there were very few families, which is the main cause for the school to have a low enrolment figures on the admission roll. Children on the other part of the area went to a bigger school and very few attended this one. This area is 45 kilometres away from the nearest town where the CMC is. Access to the school is a bit problematic because only one kilometre is spent on the tar road and the rest of 44 kilometres is spent on the poor gravel road. According to the information received from the principal, most of the children that attended this school lived with their parents who worked on the Sappi forests found in the area. Their parents came home in the afternoons and the people that took care of them during the day were the grandparents.

In this school there were four teachers including the Grade R practitioner and the principal-cum teacher. There were seven classrooms on a very small site and one of those classrooms was the principal's office. The classrooms were well cared for. All the classrooms had window panes and the doors were lockable. In each classroom, there was a chalkboard. The school was electrified and all the classrooms had all the fittings. There was a block of toilets with 4 seats that were used by a total number of 136 learners and the teachers. The school had no kitchen that was used to prepare food for learners but one of the classrooms was used for the purpose. The school was surrounded with a 1.8 metres weld mesh fencing wire but there were holes that had been opened by the public for illegal entries after school hours.

The four teachers stationed in the school were responsible for the teaching and learning process in the school. The Grade R practitioner was responsible for Grade R learners in the school; there was one teacher that was also responsible for Grade 1 in the school and there was also one teacher that was responsible for a mono-grade Grade 4 class. The principal cum-teacher was responsible for the multi-grade class for Grades 2 and 3. According to the information given to me by the PCT, multi-grade teaching in the school was a new practice and the teachers were

reluctant to engage themselves in the practice when it became the necessity in the school after the drop in the PPN. She then decided to take it and became responsible for it so as to show other teachers that it was possible to handle a multi-grade class. The distribution of learners was 25 for Grade R, 27 for Grade 1, 49 for the Grade 2 and 3 multi-grade class and 25 for Grade 4. The school offered all the South African approved subjects in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. The medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase was IsiZulu and in the Intermediate Phase was English. The school had a state paid security guard but had no administration clerk and no state paid cleaner. In this school, they had a cook that prepared meals for learners.

The school was a section 21 school without function C. With this status, the only amount that was deposited into the school bank account were the funds for the Non-Learner Teacher Support Material and for the Learner Teacher Support Material, which was kept by the Department of Education. The school had a photocopier that it used to produce copies when they needed to. There was evidence of a corner library in every classroom. The school benefited from the NSNP. The school did not have a space for sports activities and learners and teachers had to travel a distance of one kilometre to a nearby community sports field for sports activities.

#### *5.4.5. Research Site 5 (Hills Primary School)*

Another school was Hills Primary School. The school was situated on a hill in an area ruled by a king. The school was 90 kilometres from the nearest town. In order to get to the school, you travel through the dusty gravel road for 25 kilometres. Before you get to school you travel through the bush that is full of wild animals. Along the road, as you drive, on the hills there are a number of walls that tell you that there were houses built but there are no more people staying in. According to the information supplied by the principal, the area was a very big settlement before the faction fights that took place in the area in 1998. As a result, in the area where the school was there was not even a single house or family staying. The only houses, from where the learners came, were on the other western part of the area which was the settlement that did not have a big number of families residing there. In another settlement which was 1.5 kilometres from that settlement, there was another primary school. These were the reasons that made this school to



have a low enrolment figure. The principal told me that this used to be a very big school with about 900 learners and this could be seen even by looking at the infrastructure that the school had. Most of the learners that attended to this school stayed with the grandparents since their parents stayed in big cities for job opportunities. Some of the learners were reported to stay with their parents who were in their youth, who headed the families and this was due to natural deaths of their parents and deaths through killings during the faction fights that once took place in the area.

Hills Primary School was a five-teacher primary school that offered a full cycle of a primary school and this figure included the Grade R practitioner. The first teacher in the school was the Grade R practitioner who focused to Grade R only, the second teacher was in charge of a multi-grade consisting of Grades 1 and 2, the third teacher was also responsible for a multi-grade consisting of Grades 3 and 4, the principal-cum teacher handled a multi-grade consisting of Grades 5 and 6 and the fifth teacher taught Grade 7 mono-grade. In each of the grades that they taught, they offered all the approved subjects as per the NCAPS. The school had one state paid security guard who ensured safety and security for human and physical resources in the institution but it had no state paid administrative personnel and grounds man. Learners performed the cleaning tasks in the school premises and the administrative role was assigned to some of the teachers.

In this school, there were five blocks of classrooms and they all added up to 27 classrooms and this was the evidence that the school was once very big. However, during the time of study, only one block, with five classrooms was utilized for teaching and learning purposes. In the other block, only the principal's office was utilized and the rest of the classrooms were not utilized. The classrooms that were in use were in a good condition but they needed minor repairs since in some the door locks were not functioning and few window panes were broken. Other blocks of classrooms that were not in use were in a very poor state. They were not taken care of and not properly maintained like the other blocks that were in use. One of the old classrooms was utilized as a zone for preparing meals for the learners. By the school gate, there was a very good

looking guard room. Around the school, there was 1.8 metres weld mesh fence which also needed minor repairs since it had holes which were illegally opened by trespassers.

The school was a section 21 without function C. Similarly, all the funds for LTSM for the school was kept by the Department Of Education and the school had to follow the prescribed procurement procedures to get its LTSM. In each classroom that was utilized there was a surplus of desks, each learner sat on his/her own desk. In each classroom there was evidence of corner library where all current textbooks were kept. The school had a photocopier that was utilized for administration purpose and to make copies for teaching and learning. The school benefited from the NSNP and one cook was employed for this purpose.

The next section presents the participants in the study.

## **5.5. Principal-cum teachers who participated in the study**

### *5.5.1. Principal-cum teacher 1*

PCT 1 was an African female, age 57 at the time of this study. She was in a possession of a Junior Primary Teachers' Diploma (JPTD) and a Further Diploma in Education (FDE) specializing in Education Leadership and Management. During the time of study, she had an experience of 32 years with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education teaching in various schools. In this school where she was stationed, she had only taught for five years after she came to be the principal of the school. She was the member of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU). She was a single parent of five children, three daughters and two sons, and grandmother of four grandchildren.

The school that she managed as the principal, offered the full cycle of a primary school which starts from Grade R to Grade 7. Being the principal of the school, she was also responsible for a multi grade-class. She was responsible for the lower grades, which was Grade R to Grade 3 and

the other teacher was responsible for the other grades which were Grade 4 to 7. This tells us that this principal-cum teacher was simultaneously engaged in managing the school and teaching 4 grades in the school. As a principal in South Africa, she was performing all the roles attached to the principal as per the Employment of Educators' Act 76 of 1998 and as a multi-grade teacher, she was responsible for all the duties assigned to a classroom based teacher.

#### 5.5.2. *Principal-cum teacher 2.*

Principal-cum teacher 2 was an African female, age 53 during the time of study. She possessed the Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma (SPTD), the Higher Diploma in Education (HDE) and the Bachelor of Education Honours Degree. She had an experience of 25 years of working with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. She worked in a number of schools in the province, that includes primary schools and secondary schools. In the school where she was stationed she had an experience of 9 years. She came to this school to be the principal after the principal that had been there resigned at the age of 54. She was a single mother of 3 children, which were 3 daughters. She was the member of the National Teachers Union (NATU) where she had held a number of leadership positions. During the time of study she was the secretary of the branch committee for the teacher union.

The school that she managed had two teachers in the main stream. In addition to this number of teachers, the Department of Education had given them a stipendiary Grade R teacher who was only responsible for Grade R learners only and as a result they ended being three on site. While the stipendiary teacher was responsible for Grade R, the other two teachers shared the other grades among themselves. The first teacher was responsible for the foundation phase which is Grade R to Grade 3 and the principal-cum teacher was responsible for the intermediate phase which is Grade 4 and 5 in their case since their school ended in Grade 5. Similarly, like PCT-1 this principal-cum teacher simultaneously performed the roles of the principal as well as the roles assigned to a classroom-based educator in a multi-grade class of two classes.

### 5.5.3. *Principal-cum teacher 3*

Principal-cum teacher 3 was an African female, age 41 during the time of study. She was in a possession of JPTD and Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE). She had been a teacher for 18 years in the same school where she has worked for 17 years as a PL1 teacher. It was her first year of being the principal of the school after the resignation of the principal in the school. She was a member of the SADTU. She was a single mother of two children, which was a daughter and a son. The school that she managed offered Grade R to Grade 4. Unlike the school where PCT-2 was stationed, this school had not been granted a stipendiary Grade R teacher. Therefore Grade R learners were also handled by the two teachers that were available at school. The new teacher who had been appointed after the resignation of the former principal taught Grade R and 4 which had only 6 learners. The principal-cum teacher taught the other grades which were Grade 1 to Grade 3.

### 5.5.4. *Principal-cum teacher 4*

Principal-cum teacher 4 was an African female, at the age of 55 during the time of study. She was in a possession of a Secondary Teachers' Diploma (STD), the Higher Diploma in Education (HDE) and the Bachelor of Education Honours Degree (B Ed Hon). She had been teaching for 31 years during the time of study and had taught in a number of schools. She spent most of her career in a number of secondary schools. She had only twelve years experience of working in the primary school. In the primary school, she only worked in this school where she was currently stationed and she took over as a principal after her predecessor went on ill-health retirement. She was married and had five children, four daughters and one son and three grandchildren. She was a member of the SADTU

The school that she managed offered Grade R to Grade 4 and there were four teachers. Fortunately, in this school they were granted a stipendiary Grade R teacher. Therefore, she was responsible for Grade R while the other 3 teachers were responsible for the other four grades. In

this school, a multi-grade class was still new and the teachers were not familiar with it, hence the principal-cum teacher decided to take it. She combined Grade 2 and 3 and became responsible and the other two teachers taught Grade 1 and Grade 4 as single grades. Therefore in this school the principal was simultaneously managing the school and also engaged in teaching both Grade 2 and Grade 3.

#### *5.5.5. Principal-cum teacher 5*

Principal-cum teacher 5 was an African male, age 58 during the time of study. He possessed the SPTD, HDE and the Bachelor of Arts (BA). He had a teaching experience of 35 years in various schools in the province. In this school, he had an experience of 25 years where he started as a PL 1 teacher and further promoted to the position of a Deputy Principal before he was appointed as the principal of the school after the resignation of the principal of the school. He was married and had 5 children, of which two were married, and had four grandchildren. He was a SADTU member and he had had a number of leadership roles in the teachers' union.

The school that he managed offered a full cycle of a primary school which is Grade R to Grade 7 and there were only five teachers including the principal and the Grade R practitioner. This used to be a very big school and for some reasons that have been discussed in the methodology chapter the enrolment dropped in such a way that multi-grade teaching became a necessity. The principal-cum teacher was responsible for Grade 5 and Grade 6. He was expected to perform all the class roles for the two grades and also performed all administrative roles assigned to the principal of the school if they were not delegated to other teachers.

#### *5.6. Post level one teachers who took part in the study*

The post level one teachers who participated in the study were the teachers who worked with the principal-cum teachers. With these post level one teachers, only one data collection method was utilized and that was the individual interviews. The intention was to get some information from them as people who worked closely with these principal-cum teachers. It was to get their

opinions according to their experience about the roles that the principal-cum teachers played at school. It was also to hear about the contributions the post level one teachers had in the roles of the principal cum-teachers and also in the life of the multi-grade school. Pseudonyms are used to refer to these PL 1 teachers. Miss Shirley was the PL 1 teacher stationed at Bush Primary School, Mrs Fatty was the PL 1 teacher working at Sloppy Primary School, Miss Tiny was the PL 1 stationed at Wetlands Primary School, Mrs White was the one that was stationed at Flats Primary School and Mrs Dan was the one stationed at Hills Primary School. It then becomes vital to present a brief biography about these PL 1 teachers working in these schools.

#### *5.6.1. Miss Shirley- Forest Primary School*

Miss Shirley was a female teacher at the age of 46 during the time of study. She was a mother of three children and was a single parent. She was in a possession of a Matric Certificate and a Diploma in Journalism and no formal teaching qualification. She was busy with her Bachelor of Education Degree during the time of study. She had been in the school for 11 years during the time of study. Since Forest Primary School was a two-teacher school offering the full cycle of a primary she also had a big portion of a multi-grade class that she was in charge of. She was responsible for four grades in the school and that was Grades 4 to 7. She was the main person that remained in charge of the school if the principal was not at the school and she was the one who ensured the smooth running of teaching and learning for all the 8 grades whenever the principal was away from school.

#### *5.6.2. Mrs Fatty - Sloppy Primary School*

Mrs Fatty was a 54-year-old teacher during the time of study. She had a National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) and an ACE. She was the mother of three children and grandmother of three. She had a teaching experience of 29 years during the time of study, and she had worked for 20 years in the secondary school and had only spent 9 in the school where she was stationed. Mrs Fatty was in charge of a multi-grade class consisting of Grades 1 to 3 in the school. Before the principal-cum teacher came to school to be the principal, she was the acting principal in the school. Mrs Fatty was the one who always remained in charge whenever

the principal-cum teacher was away from school. She is the one who ensured that teaching and learning continued in the absence of the principal.

#### *5.6.3. Ms Tiny (Wetlands Primary School)*

Ms Tiny was a very young lady at the age of 23 during the time of study. She had just qualified to be a teacher and it was her first year to be in the school. She was in a possession of a Bachelor of Education Degree obtained from a private institution for higher learning. Among the PL 1 teachers that participated in the study she was the least experienced one in this phenomenon since it was her first year in the teaching practice. Wetlands Primary School was a two-teacher school, therefore she was the only PL 1 teacher in the school. Due to her status of being inexperienced, the principal-cum teacher decided to give her only Grade R and 4 with only 6 learners to teach. According to the information received from the principal, she did not want to overload her with too much work because she wanted her to learn how a multi-grade class is handled before she could give her too many grades. However, the fact that she was the only teacher that worked with the principal-cum teacher, she was the one who was the second in-charge in the institution and she is the one who remained with the learners at school in the absence of the principal.

#### *5.6.4. Mrs White (Flats Primary School)*

During the time of study Mrs White was 54 years old. She was married and had 4 children and 3 grandchildren. She was in a possession of SPTD, ACE and B Ed Hon. She had been working in this institution for 19 years. Her experience stretches from the period when the school still offered mono-grades only up until the time when the school, as a necessity began to offer a multi-grade class. She taught Grade 4 while the principal-cum teacher handled a multi-grade class consisting of Grade 2 and 3. As a senior teacher, she is the one that remained in-charge of the school whenever there was a need for that. I felt that she was the one that could furnish me with the relevant data since she is the one who had been in the school for quite some time and having worked closely with the principal of the school.

### 5.6.5. *Mrs Dan (Hills Primary School)*

In the last school, where data was generated, I managed to consider Mrs Dan as the teacher that could be interviewed. She was at the age of 54 during the time of study. She was in a possession of a JPTD and an HDE. She had been working in this school for 25 years. Since Hills Primary School used to be a very big school before it became small because of faction fights, she has had to experience both different experiences of the institution being a big institution and also when the school became a small school offering multi-grade classes. Amongst the few staff members that were remaining in the school, she was the only one who was a Senior Teacher amongst those that had been given this status by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Since the school had lost a number of teachers, it only remained with the principal as the SMT member, therefore Mrs Dan as a Senior Teacher played a crucial role in assisting with management duties in the school. She handled Grade 7 while the principal-cum teacher taught Grades 5 and 6 in the intermediate phase. She remained in charge of the institution when the principal was away due to the demands of the principalship job.

The next section begins to present data analysis.

## 5.7. *The PCT's daily roles*

### 5.7.1. *PCTs' early hours of the school day*

I asked the PCTs what their daily roles were and from the responses, it was clear that they were unique and did things in their own different ways. It was also clear that they all had their own different ways of starting the new day. In the beginning of this section, I focus on what the principal-cum teachers do in the beginning of the day and as the section proceeds, it extends to the whole day.

PCT 1 stated in response to this question:

*I first have to check, go around the school because there is no cleaner and there is no one who helps me to do that work. I move around just to check if everything is still in a good condition as it was the day before. Thereafter I instruct pupils to sweep the floor, sweep the veranda as well*



*as the ground in front of the offices and the classrooms. I then move to the kitchen to check if the cook has started cooking and everything is still in order like how I left the day before. (I.I.p.1)*

In Forest Primary School where PCT 1 is a principal the school did not have a security guard to perform the duties of the security guard as a result she ended up considering moving around the school to check the surrounding as her responsibility before the commencement of the classes.

The idea of PCT 1 functioning as a security guard was also echoed by Ms Shirley who is the only teacher with whom she worked in the school; this is what she said to explain the daily roles of her principal:

*“In the morning she makes sure that since this is a forest she moves around to make sure that it is clear since we do not have a security guard and she also does the toilets inspection. She is a security guard” (PL.1. I.I.p.1).*

During observations in Forest Primary School, PCT 1 was also observed moving around the school and I then requested her to explain to me why she moved around the school. She explained to me that she has had a number of cases of burglary lodged with the nearby police station and one suspect was serving two years sentence for burglary in the school. After that incident the policemen had advised her to always report the cases early with them because that led to early prosecution of the culprits. In this scenario, PCT 1 reported that whenever there was a case in the court she is the one who always represented the school as the head of the institution. This then brings closer the idea and the belief that Mintzberg (1973) has about the ten roles of management that the principal has in the school. In this regard PCT 1 as the figurehead of the institution, she has played the role of representing the school in courts for a number of times. From an interpretive paradigm point of view this role of representing the school in court is one of the factors that put her life at risk. The local person was arrested for this matter and one day he will be released and the big question is how will the release of the culprit impact to PCT 1’s life.

In her roles of inspection, she also moved to the section which the school used as a kitchen to see if everything was in a good condition. This is what Ms Shirley stated regarding the roles of PCT 1:

*“She also moves to the kitchen to make sure that all the kitchen utensils are there because at one stage they were stolen. She also goes there to check if the cook is there preparing food so that if she is not there she can start organizing something to eat for the day”* (PL11. p. 1).

Regarding the morning routine for PCT 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School had similar roles for the morning. At this school, all the learners stayed in a settlement which the teachers had never seen due to the geographical situation and it was unlike in Forest Primary School where everything managed to start on time. All the learners came late to school at Wetland Primary School due to the long distance that they walked before they got to school. During the time of study, in Wetlands Primary School, there was no cook for the National School Nutrition Programme and due to that, PCT 2 was the one who cooked food for the learners. This was a result of the poor service delivery that the service provider rendered which included non-payment of cooks for the programme. Since there were only two teachers in the school, they had divided a number of tasks among themselves and it happened that this role fell on her. This is what she said during the individual interviews responding to the question:

*“In this place where we stay, learners have a problem because in this place learners cannot keep time, they do not worry themselves even if you tell them that they must look at the bus that goes to town, they always come late to school. I then use the morning time to start cooking food for the day before they come”* (PCT 2. I.I.p, 1).

As the figurehead of the school she was responsible to make sure that those few learners that came to school benefited from the feeding scheme, hence she started cooking early before

learners came in for their contact time. PCT. 2 reported that in the school, learners only started to come in dribs and drabs after 8H15. This is what she stated:

*“When they start arriving at 8H15, I move to the school gate to monitor them as they arrive. Since they walk in the forest I have to make sure that they all come to school safe and I must know when one of them has had a problem on the way so that I can attend to the matter at an early stage”* (PCT 2. I.I. p.1).

The above response accentuates the point that in the school where PCT 2 was stationed she played the role of the security guard. As the responsibility manager, PCT 2 believed that it is her duty to ensure safety and security of the learners that were brought to her care. She was also portrayed as a person who had a concern about the environment where her school learners travelled and she was always prepared to come to their aid should there be a need for that.

According to PCT 2, it was only after she was satisfied that all learners had come to school safely she went back to the one classroom school. For PCT 2 after they had arrived it was only then she began the role of giving instructions to the learners to start the cleaning process and she did the supervision and according to her this was very important because the very same classroom that they swept was the classroom where she had all her pots in one corner on the stove. The supervision that she had to perform is two-fold: she supervised learners as they cleaned and also controlled them not to go to her „corner kitchen“. She was aware that as they were at school with her as the principal she was held accountable for them therefore she had to make sure that they are safe. While PCT 2 was busy with learners who cleaned the classroom, other younger learners cleaned the yard under the supervision of the PL 1 teacher, Ms Tiny. PCT 2 believed that in order for her to function well, she needed the hands and the eyes of the teacher that she worked with.

PCT 3 whose school had two sites of operation had a different story to tell with regard to her morning routine. The reason for this school to have two sites was that it was relocating from the

old school site to the new site which was on a flat piece of land as compared to the old one. In her response she unveiled that she had set days and sites for her to start her days for consultations. According to PCT 3 she believed it was better for her to start with consultations with the parents in the morning so that when she commenced with her roles for multi-grade teaching there was nothing that disturbed her while she was busy with her work. She supported the idea of „Education for all” as enshrined in South Africa’s White Paper 6 She believes that all children have right to good quality education either in a mono-grade or a multi-grade class. This is what she stated:

*“I have set days for myself for consultations with the parents. On those days, in that site I come at 7H20 and I inform the parents that whoever wants to come and see me must come at that time so that we can have enough time before I start the work of the day with my learners. It is not all the days where there will always be parents for consultations, sometimes there are no consultations and during that time I assist the teacher on site with the morning routine of cleaning the classroom. If I have not been in the site where I am stationed with my multi-grade class I then leave the site at 7H50 and go to the site where I am stationed and see to it that the teacher that I have left has instructed the learners to clean the classroom. (PCT 3 p.1).*

For PCT 3 a lot of travelling was done in the morning and it had to be done considering time as an important resource. She believed that she had to be accessible to the people whom she served and she made sure that she got closer to them by creating time for consultations. PCT 3 did not allow the conditions to close the space for contact between her and the beneficiaries” parents or guardians. This is a very good culture to prevail in the organization and in the South African context it is one of the principles spelt out in the Principles of Batho Pele which is one of the guidelines governing the functioning of public institutions.

PCT 3 also utilized this time in the morning to check the lesson plans as submitted by the teachers to her office before the school started and this was done daily. According to her it was vital for her as a manager to know what teachers would be doing with the learners before they started working. She believed that if she checked their lesson plans before they started teaching

she would be able to identify areas that needed interventions and she would be able to intervene at an early stage. This is how she made her statement:

*“Before the teachers start working, I make sure that I sign their lesson plans and see to it that it is in line with the Annual Teaching Plan. This helps me a lot to be able to see if there is somewhere where I need to intervene as the principal and the curriculum specialist in the school. For me this is the interesting part of it because I have been a Head of Department for a long time where I have been working”* (PCT 3.p.1).

Similarly, PCT 1, PCT 2, PCT 4 and PCT 5 concurred with PCT 3 with regard to the importance of checking the lesson plans of the teachers. All principal-cum teachers regarded checking lesson plans as one of the roles that they performed in the morning; however, PCT 1 had a concern that for her it was a huge task on its own. In Forest Primary School, PCT 1 taught Grade R, 1, 2 and 3 and Ms Shirley, the only PL 1 in the school taught Grades 4, 5, 6 and 7. For PCT 1 it was a huge task because when Ms Shirley does her lesson planning, she does it for each grade and subject separately. Therefore, PCT 1 as the person responsible for curriculum in the school, had to scrutinize the lesson plans before she appended her signature on it and yet she still had to go to the classroom during her first period with her multi-grade class. She stated:

*“It is much better in the bigger schools because they have HODs who check lesson plans for teachers in the morning. It is a different case with us in small schools, we check it as principals of schools. I have to check her lesson plans in the morning but I find it very difficult because there is no time for that since she does lesson plans for all the subjects that she teaches. I cannot scrutinize all what she has written up to my satisfaction and I end up signing without reading with the hope that she has written correctly. I am scared because she is an unqualified person, she needs my contributions as a principal but esh..... I do not have time because I must rush for class”* (PCT 1. p.1).

PCT 4 also performed the lesson plan checking role in the morning but she also complained that she did not have enough time to do it due to the arrangement that she had with her learners. This is what she stated concerning her morning roles:

*“My roles start in the morning when I arrive at school, I make sure that I am early before 7 whether learners are there or not. According to my plan I start at 7 with Grade 3 for Mathematics. I have decided to start early with Grade 3 since they write ANA quarterly which is set externally. I want to give them enough time so that they do not let me down during ANA”* (PCT 4, p.1).

Similarly, PCT 5, the only male principal-cum teacher in the study also had a class in the morning. With him he had made a plan since multi-grade teaching had just begun in their school, he was not familiar with it. He had requested the learners in Grade 5 and 6 to come in the morning at 7H00 for morning classes. He was also concerned about the subjects in which learners wrote ANA and he had decided to give those learners more time so that they were not disadvantaged by the situation and he also stated that he was also in a stage whereby he was exploring what worked for him in this situation. This is how he expressed himself:

*“I leave home early in the morning at six so that I arrive at school at 6H45 to prepare myself for the morning class. In the first 15 minutes, I make photocopies for everything that I will need for my lessons. I have decided to change the subjects that write ANA for the morning class. I believe I need to have enough time for English and Mathematics since these subjects are externally set during ANA. As a person engaged in multi-grade teaching you must think for yourself because nobody will ever think for you”* (FGI p.1).

PCT 5 began his day in the classroom with his learners because he was concerned with the learners that he produced. This served as evidence to show how principal-cum teachers could commit themselves to ensure being passionate and visionary about the service that they rendered to learners they taught. When he was asked during the observations as to why he was doing it, he emphasized that he liked to be proud of the product that he produced and he always strove for the best all the time. He further explained that as the principal of the school, he believed that it was beneficial for him to utilize whatever opportunity became available for him with the learners

because he also had some other roles to perform that were assigned to him as the principal. However, these arrangements made by these principal-cum teachers were sometimes hindered by other compulsory activities that had to take place. PCT 4 and PCT 5 raised a concern that on Mondays and Fridays they always held briefing meetings in the morning before teaching and learning commenced and as a result during those days there were some impediments to their programmes due to multiple roles that the principal-cum teachers had within schools. In this regard, PCT 5 had this to say:

*“Every Monday and Friday, in the morning we hold our briefing meeting in our school. On Monday we sit down and do our planning for the week and on Friday we review how far did we go to achieve all what we planned for the week. As a result I do not have enough time to go and see my learners on those days because even these meetings are important for us as teachers”* (PCT 5.p.1).

In line with this, this is what PCT 4 stated with regard to briefings in the school:

*“We hold our briefings informally because every time I am rushing to the classroom to meet my learners who are already there waiting for me. I sometimes give some items to the teachers to talk about and run to the classroom because I am concerned about these learners, I cannot ignore them”* (PCT 4. p.1).

During the focus group interviews when the issue of briefing was alluded to by one of them, different opinions came up from the group members. For PCT 1, working in a two-teacher school, the best place for them where she conducted the briefing meeting was in her car as they travelled to the school with Ms Shirley. This signifies that for PCT 1 every moment that offers itself for her, is taken as a precious moment for her school. She declared that it had become a norm for them to hold briefings in the car because at school she was awaited by other activities which she could not ignore. She explained:

*“I cannot hold briefings on Mondays because as soon as I jump off, I start moving around to see if everything is in order because of what has occasionally happened in our school. I run around*

*the school, move to the toilets and go to the kitchen, really there is no time for me to do the briefing” (FGI. p.1).*

In South Africa, the right to education is one of the fundamental rights that are promulgated in the Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996. Therefore, all the children that go to school become entitled to this right as enshrined by the highest law of the land. This is also advocated by the existence of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 which guides and gives direction in the functionality of schools in the country. The data generated in this study shows that the principal-cum teachers have a great challenge in making this a reality, irrespective of what the circumstances and the conditions are in the schools that they manage. The data reflects that all the five principal-cum teachers regarded teaching and learning as the core-business of the school as a priority in schools. All believe that the first task that they have to do in the morning is teaching the learners that have been brought to them to teach. However, for the principal-cum teachers this means the beginning of a task that comes with complexity and a lot of unexpected events that interfere with plans for the day. It means the beginning of a session with a lot of different roles and different task environment as spelt out by Potgieter (1972) in the functionality of a school principal. My findings were consistent with findings for Lumby and Azaola (2011) when they studied women principals in small schools in South Africa as considered in the literature review. The findings were that due to the situation in small schools, principals have to be multi-functional and very flexible.

### ***5.7.2. PCTs at work after 8H00***

The principal-cum teachers began their day by going to the classroom before they could perform other administrative roles as per their job description as principals. In South Africa, job descriptions of all the employees in the education sector is contained in the Employment of Educators Act 78 of 1998 and with regard to principals of schools, the policy stipulates that principals are expected to teach between 10% and 92% as cited earlier. The principal-cum teachers had another story to tell which made it difficult to understand in terms of attempting to



associate it with the percentage of time stipulated for the principals of schools. In response to the question about their daily roles this is what PCT 1 stated regarding her role for teaching learners:

*“At 8 o’clock I go to the classroom where I teach Grade R, 1, 2 and 3. All these classes are looking at me to teach them and so I am always busy at the school in such a way that I even forget the break time and I am reminded by the cook that it is the break time because I am always busy in the classroom moving up and down teaching Grade 1, while the Grade ones are writing I move to Grade two and while the Grade twos are writing I have to move to Grade threes. Sometimes I teach the same thing to Grade two and three and I make them write the same exercise. If I am doing each exercise for individual classes it takes too long so I have to teach them together to make them understand and that would allow me to give them one exercise”* (PCT 1.p.1).

From the preceding response it could be drawn that the principal-cum teacher was overloaded in terms of the classes that she taught. With regard to the subjects, she was also overloaded because each class had four subjects since she was responsible for the entire Foundation Phase. The data reflected that as soon as she started working with the learners she became committed trying to focus on the different content areas to be taught for each grade on that day. From the preceding response, I could learn that the principal-cum teacher sometimes taught two different grades the same content due to time constraints and they were made to write the same exercise. From this I could learn that the PCT always endeavours to make her learners to have something to learn each day; however, learners that have been made to write an exercise that is not at their level may be disadvantaged by the strategy employed. According to the data generated, much of the time was spent on teaching and giving learners exercises to write to such an extent that there is no time for the teacher to do marking while learners are writing, which is recommended for early identification of areas where learners could not understand. This is the exercise that enables the teacher the opportunity to engage in suitable assistance with the learner that has a problem and with the teacher engaged in the situation of this nature the teacher becomes a restricted professional in her practice (Hoyle, 1980).

Consequently, PCT 3 had her own way which was more or less the same as PCT.1's of functioning in the classroom. She made her statement with confidence to explain her view and this is what she stated:

*"I spend most of my time by working with my learners in the class. So in the class I teach two grades and that is Grade four and five. As I teach grade four and five I need to organize myself and plan because the classes need to be taught perfectly with the understanding of the content to be taught. For an example if I have to teach Social Sciences in Grade four and five, I start with Grade four and teach them and I make sure that before I move on to the next grade I give the grade fours something to write so that they are occupied as I am busy with Grade five. Same thing applies when I have started with Grade five. After I have finished with Grade five, I give them written work and go back to Grade four for marking" (PCT 3. p.1).*

From the preceding response by PCT 3, I could understand that she was the person that had a passion for her work as a teacher and committed towards producing good results. In her response she used two concepts which are regarded as management tasks for principals and they are planning and organizing Castetter (1981). From what I understood she was the person that believed in doing things that were thoroughly planned. According to Van Der Westhuizen (1991), in planning, it where aims and objectives are stated upfront and they serve as a pointer of what is to be achieved. In her planning role, PCT 3 planned upfront how she was going to teach on that day in terms of grades. She further continued and organized herself in such a way that as she taught the other grade, the other one had something to do. This requires a lot of time from the implementer but in her response she stated that she spent most of her time with her learners in the classroom. This indicates that most of PCT 3's time was spent on teaching and learning during office hours.

In expressing her daily roles as the principal of the school and a multi-grade teacher, PCT 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School also had lamentation about functioning in the situation, where she raised a number of concerns about her engagement in this practice in her school. She sadly stated this during the individual interview with her:

*“I am teacher, a principal and I am responsible for the Foundation Phase. I handle Grade one, Grade two and Grade three. I teach all the subjects to all these learners in the Foundation Phase. In that time, the other teacher needs help from me, especially since the new teacher we have is new in the field, she needs help and the learners need help.” (PCT 2.p.1).*

From the response above the principal-cum teacher highlights the multiple roles that are performed by her simultaneously. Wetlands Primary School offers five lower grades for the primary school and PCT 2 handles three of those grades. While she is busy with her teaching role with her multi-grade class, she also has a role of coaching the newly appointed teacher that she works with. In the case, she is reflected as a person that is concerned with what is happening in the school and as a principal, she is aware that she has to give clear direction to the new teacher. From this point I can draw that at some stage while PCT 2 performs her teaching and learning role, she reserves time for leading as one of the tasks assigned to the manager (Van Der Westhuizen (1991). According to Van Der Westhuizen (1991) leading and guiding is one of the management tasks which the principal cannot ignore. It is in these tasks that the principal would be able to give clear direction as to how things are done in the organization. Rynders (1977) describes leading and guiding as the activity which influences people in such a way that they willingly work and strive towards achieving the goals of the group. A number of scholars like Getzel et al, (1968); Lipham and Hoeh, (1974); Gorton, (1976); Campbell et al, (1977); Castetter, (1981); Rebore, (1982); Kimrough and Nunnery (1983) have all agreed that one of the key areas where the principal has to stretch his/her arm to is curriculum and teaching affairs. For me this is the crucial role due to the fact that they form part of the core-business of the school. Looking at what PCT 2 does, it serves as a correlation to what these scholars have agreed on. However, in the situation for PCT 2, this practice exercise expected from her as the principal of the school interfered with her contact time with the learners that she taught but then she could not ignore it because she wanted to get things done too even in the other grades that she did not teach.

PCT 2 was concerned that there were always possible hindrances that made her to be unable to finish some of the lessons she had planned for her learners. This is how she made her view:

*“Perhaps sometimes while I am still busy with the learners, the phone rings and it tells me about something needed at the circuit office and I am bound to leave” (PCT 2, p.2).*

From the preceding response I could understand that during teaching and learning at a certain stage unexpected calls from the circuit office requesting submissions from her disturbed her while she was working. As a committed and a responsible person PCT 2 then leaves to attend to those requested submissions and for me that interfered with the quality time that she had planned to spend with the learners. In echoing with this, similar views were raised by PCT 5 during the focus group interviews and this is how he aired his views:

*“It is very disturbing when the circuit office or the district office phones you and requests for something while you are trying to push with the learners. Our situation is not similar like people that have enough people who can be delegated to go to the circuit office to collect or submit whatever is due. You end up leaving your learners and run to the circuit office for collection and at that time there is nothing much you can leave for your learners since everything is short notice” (FGI. p.1).*

### *5.7.3. PCTs and their administrative roles*

The data generated revealed that the principal-cum teachers found it difficult to perform their administrative roles in schools where they managed. From their responses, it could be drawn that much of the time was spent in teaching their multi-grade classes. A number of scholars view educational administration as a crucial role in the life of a school. Botes (1975) states that administration or administrative work involves daily office routine, bookkeeping and clerical work. Similarly, Reynders (1977) defines the administrative function as the role that has to do with reporting in the widest sense of the word, bookkeeping, statistics, cost and management accounting, record keeping and general office organization. Nell (1977) as cited in Van Der Westhuizen (1991, p. 36) passes a very strong warning regarding administration, he cites “it is completely nonsensical to view the field of educational administration as consisting of routine administrative tasks such as departmental forms and official returns only”. Van Der Westhuizen (1991) aptly state that administration is the more formal and regulative execution of a policy already formulated by higher authority, and is accompanied by procedure arrangements and their

execution. Therefore, administration becomes an important task in order for the institution to run smoothly. The different principal-cum teachers had different responses regarding administrative roles in the schools they managed. This is what PCT 5 stated regarding the administrative roles:

*“I do not have time to go to the office and perform my administrative roles because most of the time I am with my multi-grade class learners that require me to be with them. I must change the two grades for the whole day trying to make sure that they have done something before they go home. It is much better where there are many people to give tasks to but with me it is tough. I cannot give my tasks to a person who is already overloaded”* (PCT 5. p.1).

The response that PCT 5 gave indicated that most of his time was spent in teaching and no time for administration. Trustworthiness of this response was enhanced by Ms Dan, the teacher in the school who said:

*“It is very tough for our principal to sit in the office and perform his administrative roles because there are learners who always look at him to learn and there is nothing much that we can help him with because we also have our own multi-grade classes. I do not know how he does it. We wish we were many in the school so that he would not be having many subjects like this to take. (PCT 5.p.2).*

All the five principal-cum teachers echoed that there was no time for them to focus to their administrative roles and their responses were compatible. PCT 4, the principal of Flats Primary School expressed herself in this fashion to respond to the question:

*“I cannot stay in the office to sort my files and sort my cupboard as a school principal and update information because there is no time, teaching is what I do daily from 7HOO depending which day it is, I make sure that I am with my learners. There is class that I believe is disadvantaged by the situation whenever I have to go to the office. The period of one hour cannot be divided for two different grades”* (PCT 4. p.2).

PCT 1, the principal of Forest Primary School also shared the same sentiment with other participants in the study and she responded thus:

*“Between 8H00 and 14H30 there is nothing else that I can do except teaching and learning. The only administration that I can do at that time is administration roles that have to do with teaching and learning like assessment, recording and monitoring learners’ attendance only. That is only done inside the classroom. There is no time for administration, what I am doing with my multi-grade class is time consuming” (PCT 1.p.1).*

With regard to the issue of administration in the school and from the responses that I received from the participants, I am of the opinion that all the principal-cum teachers spent most of their time playing their role in the teaching and learning process. Their role of administration as they are expected to play, received very little attention due to the condition that they functioned under. The data generated reveals that the principal-cum teachers believed in the pertinence of learning in the school and as a result in their unusual practice they made it a priority. However, the data reveals that even though the principal-cum teachers least considered administration due to circumstances but it became clear that there were issues of administration that they could not ignore even during their contact time with the learners which they regarded as being important to them. All the five participants agreed that sometimes there were activities which interfered with their teaching role which they could not ignore. In their responses they cited issues of officials visiting them in schools with some forms to be filled in, the issue of deliveries that came to school which required them to receive and confirm and also the calls that were always received from the circuit office requesting collections and submissions from them.

PCT 2 at Forest Primary School expressed her opinion in this manner to respond to this question:

*“There are things that you cannot delegate to another person, things that you account for and it becomes your responsibility to receive those things. For example if the van delivers stationery and food for learners, I have to be there and check it as the principal of the school. If this then happens during the time when I am busy working in the classroom I am then forced to attend to the driver”.*

This nature of interference was also echoed through the response by PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School during the individual interview:

*“During teaching and learning time I am in the class doing what I am supposed to do. Sometimes you find that there are submissions that have to be done and those submissions need*

*me, then there is destruction because I need to take an hour working with the teachers. By that time learners need to have something that they are doing, since we have two sites the teacher that is working in the other site comes up so that we can meet” (PCT 3.p.1).*

The response that the principal-cum teacher gives in this case raises many areas of concern. From the response given, I am tempted to believe that the principal-cum teacher regarded these acts of preparing for the compulsory submissions as a “destruction” in the culture for teaching and learning in the school. The nature of “destruction” is not because this is a least considered role but the circumstances under which she functions drives her to regard teaching and learning as requiring her eminent effort. As the figurehead, she believes that before any submission can be done, consultation is a prerequisite. Moreover, this school where PCT 3 operates has two sites and the point that she emphasizes is that there is time wasted by the teacher teaching in the other site while moving from site A to site B. This indicates that in some cases in order for the principals of multi-grade schools to be able to meet the deadlines there has to be interference with the culture of teaching and learning. In the KwaZulu-Natal Education Summit 2015, held in the Olive Convention Centre, the Member of Executive Council responsible for education Nkonyeni P.N. and the Provincial Education Head of Department, Sishi N emphasized that all the hours spent by a learner in the school should be spent in learning. They candidly stated this aligning themselves with the theme of the summit which was “The doors of learning and culture shall be opened”. The concern that I have is that having stated this and principals striving to make it a reality, how feasible it is for the multi-grade schools to ensure that this becomes a reality in their context.

The response by PCT 3 was also echoed by the response by Ms Fatty who works with her in the school who also voiced that when there is something urgent to be submitted to the circuit office, they had to go and congregate so that they provided the principal with the information that she required. She expounded thus:

*“When I receive a call from the principal during the contact time telling me that I must come up, I know that there is something urgent to attend too. I then make means to give my learners some work that they will remain with while I am gone up to meet with the principal on the other site”.*

Ms White, from Flats Primary School also contended with what the other PL 1 teachers stated regarding the administrative roles in their schools, she expressed her response thus:

*“In our school, our principal does not have time to perform her administrative roles because of this multi-grade class. It was much better when there were still enough teachers in our school. She only had one grade to teach but now she has two grades to teach it is very hard. Sometimes if it is something urgent she ends up gathering us during break time so that we can provide her with information that she requires. I remember when we had to gather data for SASAMS, it was very hectic because we had to have all the information within the first ten days of the school year, sometimes we had to give learners some work and run to the office”.*

The response provided by Ms White was consistent with what the other PL 1 teachers said about the principals that they operated with. In her response, she revealed that in their school, in order for the culture of teaching and learning not to be disturbed and the learner’s right to education not violated, the principal utilized break time to collect information from them. This showed a degree of understanding from the teachers within this community of practice. The teachers in this situation seem to understand the enterprise they gathered in. In this school, there is a very great element of considering their practice as a joint enterprise whereby they all have to contribute (Wenger, 1998). In order to fulfil the purpose, the teachers sacrificed their resting time to get things happening in the school.

The incidents of unexpected visitors coming to the school and being attended by the school principal were observed during the data generation process in schools under study. This is something that happens in other schools as well but in bigger schools there is enough personnel to attend to matters as compared to small multi-grade schools. In many cases, they were attended to by school principals. When I was in Forest Primary School, a District official came to school while the principal was busy with her learners in the classroom. The male District Official requested her to come to the office for some information pertaining the functionality of the



school. The principal spent two hours with the District official who eventually moved around this school with the principal taking some photos of the school. At that moment, the principal-cum teacher had left an exercise with the learners to write but I do not think it was a long exercise that could take them two hours to finish. This was a situation that the principal could not avoid and she was compelled to attend to the official as the figurehead of the institution (Mintzberg (1973). In this situation, the principal played an information provisioning role as the representative representing the school community. In this role Mintzberg cites that it is the duty of the school principal to be the spokesperson for the school in some cases as the person who is the resource person or liaison person for the school.

At Flats Primary School, during the period when I conducted observations, a van came unexpectedly delivering a certain box in the school. The driver requested that it would be received by the school principal who then gave learners some work to do and left for the office to do the receiving. The driver gave her the box and then began the process of showing her how to utilize the equipment that was delivered. As a result one hour went while the principal was in the office and she could not finish properly what she had planned. This shows that in this environment, there are always unexpected “destructions” in the functioning of the school. In normal schools with adequate human resources, some of these roles are delegated to other available personnel but in this situation, it is limited. Similarly, in Wetlands Primary School, during the observation period, a van for the service provider for the National School Nutrition Programme came to deliver some goods. Unfortunately on that day the PL 1 teacher with whom she worked was not at school; she had gone for a professional developmental session at the nearest town. When the van came unexpectedly, the principal had to run to the gate to open since the school did not have a security guard; after that she had to come back to the classroom to receive the stock delivered. She did the counting to make sure that everything was in order before she appended her signature on the delivery note. Since they came unexpectedly, she did not give her learners something to write and while she was busy with the driver the learners were making a noise because they did not have anything to do with them at that time.

My observations revealed that there were a number of incidents which happened unexpectedly that impacted negatively on the culture of teaching and learning in schools. These are the incidents that the principals could not avoid and required their attention. My observations made me develop an opinion that in this practice it is very difficult to properly adhere to the daily teaching plan as required because there are greater opportunities for “destructions” on your daily plan by other official compulsory tasks. Another factor that increases opportunities for “destructions” is the way the roles of the principal are spread and his or her task environment. Amongst the task environment that Potgieter (1972) mentions, he cites that the principal has to link with inspection services, school board, circuit inspector, auxillary services, outsiders and outside institutions, parent teacher association etc. It is not in all cases that these stakeholders will come to the principal having announced their visits but at some stage they come unexpectedly which always becomes an impediment to the principal’s plans with regard to the programme of teaching and learning for that particular day.

### ***5.8. How do PCTs experience their multiple roles?***

Findings show that in a number of ways principals of schools working under this condition function in the practice which has complexity. In the above section, the data has made it clearer that these principals perform multiple tasks in their schools which include handling multi-grade classes, limited opportunities of playing their administrative roles as heads of institutions as well as their extra-curricular roles. In this section, I then try to look directly at the challenges that they encounter as they simultaneously manage schools and handle multi-grade schools.

#### ***5.8.1. PCTs being overloaded***

All the principals who were under study complained that in this situation, were overloaded by the duties assigned to them. They all agreed that they performed multiple roles that were meant for many people in the schools that they managed but due to the circumstances they were the main people that performed them.

PCT 1 stated this during the individual interview:

*“My day is very long and I do not enjoy all those benefits that are enjoyed by other people. In this situation I cannot enjoy even my break time because I always try to push wherever I am behind and I do not have many people to delegate some duties to, therefore I must always be on the field”* (PCT 1, p.3).

Similarly, PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School stated this:

*“It is too much for one person, you end up not knowing where to start and where to finish. I can feel the load on my shoulders and sometimes I cannot sleep at night trying to think about whatever I have not done. This is not easy to handle, in this case you are a teacher, a clerk, a security guard, a nurse, a councillor and sometimes a cook, this is very difficult sometimes I feel like resigning from work”* (PCT 3, p. 4).

All principals in the focus group interviews felt that they were overloaded. To concur with the other principals, this is what the principal of Flats Primary School stated during the focus group interview:

*“I do whatever I can do and what I cannot do I leave it like that because I always think that I will go mad. I have my multi-grade class this side, I also have my SASAMS to update and I am not that good in computers, this SASAMS is a problem on its own, I have submissions to make to the circuit office, I have subjects workshops to attend and I also have my monthly principals’ meeting to attend, this is too much for me”* (PCT 4, FGI, p. 5).

The data revealed that these principals were overloaded and this made their work experience unpleasant. A big workload was put on their shoulders and there were a number of sub-activities that had to be performed. This is the situation that puts a lot of pressure on them trying to meet the standards which is impossible due to multiple tasks they play in the context of multi-grade schools. The problem of principals being overloaded in the context of multi-grade school is the problem that has also been the issue in other studies being conducted in South Africa. My findings in this regard were consistent with the findings by Taole and Mncube (2012) when they studied multi-grade teaching and quality of education in South Africa in the province of the Northern Cape. They concluded that “the principals of the schools with multi-grade classes are overloaded because in addition to their jobs as principals, they have to teach, do administration work, provided transport for educators and community and their cars serve as community

ambulances”. Similar findings regarding overload were also part of Du Plessis and Subramanien’s (2014) findings in their study of challenges for multi-grade teachers in a rural Uitenhage District in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. In this study, the two researchers blended overload for principals with time constraints in which multiple roles in the context of multi-grade school have to be performed. It was found to be problematic. All these findings echo with what Brunswic and Valerien (2004); Little (2006) and Brown (2010) state regarding principals’ roles in multi-grade schools. They cite that principals of multi-grade schools are full time teachers and also expected to manage schools in the same manner as in mono-grade schools. They further state that the teaching workload and the administration required of a principal result in the administration overload and stress. My findings in the study were congruent with what these researchers and scholars found regarding multi-grade school practice in other provinces of South Africa.

#### *5.8.2. Allocated time versus roles assigned*

In responding to the questions, a number of challenges could be picked up from the principals engaged in this situation. The issue of limited time was always a concern with the principals during the data generation period, they all complained that time limited them in their practice. With regard to the issue of time, this is what PCT 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School stated with regard to time:

*“Time is not enough, let us say you have two hours for language, it means this two hour period is divided for three grades. In all these three grades, there are specific things to be done. It then becomes a problem now when you have to share these two hours for three different grades. Many things are not done properly, others do not get all what they are supposed to get from me as a teacher”* (PCT 2, p. 2).

The response from the principal revealed that as a teacher in the classroom, she encountered some problems because what she had to do fell within the period that was specifically designed for a mono-grade yet with her she had three grades to share the time with. In this response, the principal was being honest and she admitted that some other crucial things were not attended to

properly due to time constraints. With a similar feeling about the practice, this is what PCT 1, the principal of Forest Primary School stated:

*“Time is a problem with me, I can say that my work is not up to the standard, I can feel that it is not up to the standard because I do not have time for the class, it is beyond what I can do, it is above the call of duty. Sometimes I realise that I have not reached where I wanted to reach. I end up restarting again and again and the time you start again time is moving. I remain behind with the programme of the day because I still have to go and perform my administration roles”. (PCT 1.p.2).*

In this response, the issue of time affected the quality of work which the principal believed her learners were supposed to get. The point that she made was that whenever there was a need for remedial work, she found it very difficult to engage on the programme of that nature because time moved and she remained behind. She also cited that the situation was beyond her control or what she could do as a teacher.

In echoing with the others regarding time this is what PCT 5, the principal of Hills Primary School stated:

*“Time restricts me, I cannot perform up to my level best. There is too much work on one person. You do not have time to do everything thoroughly, there are areas where it is lacking because we do not have time like other people, there is too much work on us and it is strenuous” (PCT 5, p.4).*

Similarly, this is what PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School stated regarding this issue:

*“In management I do have a challenge, in this school we do not have an administrative clerk, sometimes work is too much for management and some need typing. I do not also have enough time to sit down and type because I am also teaching extra hours” (PCT 3, p.3).*

In these two responses I could understand that, the principals believed that in terms of human resources they were limited and as a result they ended up being restricted in their practice. At

some stage they also did the work of the administrative clerk they did not have and that required time from them. Sometimes they did not do it due to time constraints.

I also captured the issue of time as a barrier in the following response by PCT 4, the principal of Flats Primary School who explained:

*“I feel very bad because my performance is not good especially on the administration side, I do not have time to focus on it. I am also unable to do monitoring for teaching and learning in classrooms, I do not have time because I am busy with my multi-grade class. As a person who has an experience of teaching all classes, I am able to see if the teacher is not doing what she is supposed to do but I cannot help because I do not have time. In this situation you can never be the real principal that performs all the roles of a principal, I am more like the class teacher than being the principal. All my administration is not up to date, filling is not there” (PCT 4.p.2).*

According to this response, the participant had a feeling that she was unable to perfectly perform her administrative roles as the head of the school which was an important role that was assigned in her job description as per the Employment of Educators Act 78 of 1998. This is also echoed by the Collective Agreement 8 of 2003 which spells out the number of roles which the principal has to stretch his/her arm to in the school context with regard to management. The KwaZulu-Natal province presented its ten pillars that will drive its plan that runs between years 2015 to 2019 which has one of its pillars being curriculum management in schools. When it was presented in KZN Education Summit 2015, it was stated that education managers should be able to manage curriculum so that they can design proper intervention programmes should there be a need. However, in the preceding response, it is elicited that the engagement of the principal in a multi-grade class restricts her in performing this role of monitoring the curriculum. According to the aforementioned response, from an interpretive paradigm perspective point of view, the principal does not consider herself much as a principal but she is more of being a class teacher; this is cited where she says she is not a real principal. The conditions under which she operates restricts her performance as the head of the school.

### 5.8.3. *Lack of parental support*

Furthermore, findings show that in these schools, principals experienced lack of support and commitment from the parents who are very important stakeholders in society, particularly in the school. Lack of support by parents was alluded in various ways by the participants in the study. In this study, the principals expressed that non-cooperation by parents made their practice very difficult, particularly in the multi-grade school context which is surrounded by complexity. The participants raised this as one of the challenges that they were faced with in the multi-grade school context. My findings regarding this factor were congruent to the findings by Du Plessis and Subramanien (2014) in their study, *Voices of despair*. .

In expressing herself with regard to this issue, PCT 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School stated:

*“Uhm, parents are not co-operative. Parents always complain about us having to attend regularly for meetings, they say we are always absent from school. Parents say their children come to school for nothing even if you have given them homework, they really do not help the kids with the school. Learners do not do homework, learners are not helped in their homes. Even when there is a problem at school, you call the parents and they do not come”* (PCT 2. p. 2).

From the response by PCT 2, I could understand that parents lacked understanding of the entire situation of the schools in which their children received education. What lacked was understanding that the principal who was the figurehead in the school was also responsible for full time teaching and learning in a multi-grade class. Therefore, she was compelled to attend scheduled meetings for professional development for classroom and subject practice as well as attending matters that have to do with school leadership and management. In this school, the principal ended up running the school alone without the support from the parents as one of the significant role players in the school. This is learnt from the response given that, whenever the principal invites them for consultation they do not come to school. Another point that can be made is that the lack of co-operation experienced by principal-cum teachers in this situation does not only negatively impact on their management roles but it also overflows to the teaching and learning process. Parents have a major role that they are also expected to play in the education

of their children, which in this case they do not play. These findings are incongruous with the findings by Anderson and White (2011) where they investigated the challenges that school leaders face in creating the conditions for learning in small schools in Australia. In their study, parents played crucial roles in school activities and contributed in various ways in accessing resources to support change for school improvement. Similarly, the research of Kilpatrick, John, Mulford Falk and Prescott (2002) in rural Australia found broad community benefits through its engagement in small rural school activities.

In expressing her views regarding non-parental involvement, this is what the principal of Forest Primary School stated regarding this matter:

*“Parents do not help us at all in this school, they are not supportive at all in our school. They do not come for meetings at school, if you have six parents in a meeting that is a very big number. These people do not help you with anything, you conduct the meeting alone and they do not contribute with anything during the meeting. You talk alone in the meeting and whatever you have said to them is fine” (PCT 1.p.6).*

PCT 1 chanted the problem which was similar to other participants” in the study. Poor attendance at meetings arranged prevailed at Forest Primary School and the number of parents that the principal regarded as a big number was surprising. This raises a concern that should the decision be made in the meeting in the absence of other parents, is it possible for them to develop a sense of ownership to that decision due to the fact that they were not part and parcel of the decision making process. The principal operates in a situation whereby in a meeting there is no form of interaction, which is one way of enhancing democratic leadership in the school. The principal then operates as the only person with information which she provides them during the meeting, which is not how things should be like.

In strengthening her point, PCT 1 further cited that parents in the school did not assist the school even with issues that required financial assistance. This is the problem that can prevail even in normal schools; however, in this practice, contributions are needed the most due to challenging



circumstances. The principal highlighted that at some stage she used money from her own coffers to meet the needs of the school and she did that without any aid from the parents. This is what she stated to make her point:

*“They do not help us with anything in the school and you end up doing everything and even something that they are supposed to pay for, I end up paying from my money for other things because auditing takes all the money”* (PCT 1.p.6).

Sharing a similar experience, PCT 4, the principal of Flats Primary School, stated this during the individual interview:

*“They do not co-operate when you call them for meetings, sometimes you feel that if they can offer themselves for voluntary services it could be much better but what they know is that in the school there is money. Co-operation is too little in our school.”* (PCT 4. p.6).

The data revealed that in this situation, the principal had some expectations that she had from the parents as stakeholders but her expectations did not become a reality. From a personal point of view the principal believes in a strong partnership between the community and she cites that if people have this belief they could avail themselves for voluntary work in their school. In this community, what lacked was the sense of ownership and belonging which would drive the community members to offer themselves for services in their school. This was evident during observations. In Forest Primary School, the principal had asked one community member to come to the school and when he came, she explained that she needed someone to attend to the gutter system and the person wanted to know how much would he get for the job. The explanation I received was that, according to the information furnished to the principal by him, the amount he requested was not a wage but was for attending to himself in case the bees attacked him. Due to shortage of funds in the school, the principal could not afford to hire a person to attend to that.

#### 5.8.4. *Lack of support by the District officials*

Whilst the preceding sub section has revealed that in these schools, there was very little support given by the parents to the schools who only sent their children to schools and were not concerned about what happens after, this section speaks of another revelation that has to do with the lack of support. During the interviews it became clear that the principal-cum teachers felt that the Department of Education showed least concern about their unusual situation and no support or form of specific professional development or training in managing such schools and handling multi-grade classes simultaneously was given to them. The principal-cum teachers shared similar feelings about this issue and believed that, as an abnormal context of practice, there was a need for regular support and monitoring from the Department of Education.

In corroborating with the previous paragraph, this is what PCT 4, the principal of Flats Primary school stated to make her point:

*“I have never attended any workshop focusing on multi-grading and managing the school simultaneously. You see what I am doing, I do it on my own and there is no support from the District Office. Our SEM once said he will convene a meeting for all the multi-grade schools but it has never happened but we need a workshop of that nature, we are battling”* (PCT. 4.p.2).

In propagation of this response with regard to lack of support by the district office, PCT. 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School expressed her response like this during the individual interview:

*“I believe if the District office can organize workshops for us regularly it could be much better or at least if we can have Departmental officials coming regularly to our schools for support or just to give us hope and guidance but now we are just swimming in our own dam without any help from anyone”*(PCT 2. p.2).

Similar concerns were also raised during the focus group interviews where all of them shared their views, particularly about the lack of support and guidance from the District office. The principal of Hills Primary School expressed himself sadly when he made his point; he expressed himself as follows:

*“It is very frustrating because we are abandoned by the parents of learners as well as the District officials who should be working closely with us. It is so frustrating when they come to school for monitoring in the beginning of the terms and begin to treat you like a person that has adequate support staff and handling a mono-grade. They forget that in our case we are multi-tasking, we do work for more than two or three people at the same time” (PCT 5. FGI. p.4).*

At this juncture it is clear that support from all the stakeholders in the context of multi-grade school management and teaching is lacking. The principal-cum teachers believed that there was relevant support and guidance that they could get from the District officials if they could avail themselves. This is in line with Wenger’s theory of social practice where he states that practice connotes doing but not just doing; doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do (Wenger, 1998). The involvement of the District officials in issues around multi-grade schools management and teaching would strengthen the point made by Wenger of the importance of knowing what to do and whatever is done, is done in a meaningful way. Wenger states that if the purpose and the strategy is known than that a particular issue or matter becomes a social practice which involves all the stakeholders. According to the principal-cum teachers, the availability of District office officials for support in this practice could generate specific perspectives and terms to enable and assist them as practitioners as to what needs to be done and how needs to be done (Wenger, 1998). In addition to this, as a researcher operating in an interpretive paradigm, I am of the opinion that the principal-cum teachers believe that the District officials can provide resolutions to institutionally generated conflicts such as contradictions between measures and work particularly in the context of multi-grade schools practice where principals are performing multiple-tasks. Similar findings came up from Du Plessis and Subramanien (2014) and they also cited the factor of perceived uncaring attitude of the Department of Basic Education which the teachers claimed affected them negatively. Lack of support by the Department of Education was also one of the challenges that Mulryan-Kyne (2004) discovered when she studied teaching and learning in multi-grade school in the Irish context. This indicates that in most places where multi-grade practice takes place, support from the Department of Education is a problem and yet the practitioners in this situation believe they deserve it due to the conditions under which they work.

#### 5.8.5. *Scarcity of funds*

While still on the challenges that are faced by the principal-cum teachers managing multi-grading schools, the issue of resources was also discovered to be one of the barriers that all the respondents kept on citing. I reiterate this with the purpose of refreshing our thoughts, in the context of South Africa, funding of school is guided by the Norms and Standards for funding of schools which is standardized in the entire country. Funding in schools is effected considering the number of learners enrolled in that particular institution or organization. Each child has his or her allocation as per the determination of the Norms and Standards for funding of schools. Consequently, this is the factor that also contributed to the funding in the schools that were under study as per the information furnished by the principals. All the principals in the study alluded that due to low enrolment figures in their schools, funding was also limited and they could not purchase whatever resources they wanted to procure. This also affected them negatively in many other activities that they were willing to engage themselves in due to financial restrictions. My findings regarding funding and resources are concordant with findings for other studies on multi-grade schools that have been conducted in other provinces of South Africa. Similar findings were found by Drost, Magau and Mdekazi (1999) in their study conducted in the province of Free State in South Africa investigating multi-grade classroom practice. In that study, teachers maintained that due to lack of funding, their schools did not have adequate resources. Other researchers who also discovered similar findings were Du Plessis and Subramanien (2014).

In expressing her view, this is how PCT 4, the principal of Flats Primary School explained herself:

*“The money that comes to our school from the department is very limited, it cannot accommodate all the needs of our school. We cannot even do our repairs on ceilings and the gutter system. We cannot even repair the falling fence because the funding is small since we have few learners”* (PCT 4. p.3).

PCT 5 stated:

*“This is a no fee school and the money that we get from the department is too little. All the money that we receive goes to auditing fees and nothing you can do after that, even there in auditing we also add with our own money because it is not enough” (PCT 5,p.4).*

From these responses it became clear that the schools received very little money from the department and as a result the received fund was all spent to pay for auditing fees and very little of their basic needs. It is through this whereby I start seeing generosity that the principal-cum teacher demonstrates to get things moving in the school. The principal hinted that she ends up utilizing money from her own pocket to meet just one form of expenditure for the school. This issue of schools being non-fee paying schools has also contributed negatively even towards the mindset of the parents who put emphasis on it with regard to offering assistance. Their mindset also contributes towards making life difficult for the principal-cum teachers in the schools. This is learnt through the elaboration that was made by PCT 2 to make her point and this is what she said:

*“We have tried to request parents to contribute when learners are going for cultural activities, but they have failed, they asked why we still want money because in schools there is no money paid now, we then gave up”. (PCT 2.p.3).*

This response resonates with what has been discussed earlier in this chapter. One of the challenges that the principal-cum teachers are faced with is the non-cooperation by the parents and these responses enhance the issues of validity with regard to findings. An element of non-cooperation from parents is also unveiled through the negative response received when the school requests the parents to contribute with something so that they can meet half way with the principal.

This was also echoed through the point made by PCT 1 who stated this during the individual interview:

*“Financially we are battling in such a way that I am paying out of my pocket in order to run the school and there is nothing that I receive from the parents to assist me. In many schools when teachers go for developmental workshops, they are given travelling allowance but with us we cannot afford. I end up taking my money and give the teacher who sometime does not take it*

*because she is a very good person. I do not hide the situation, she knows everything” (PCT 1.p.6).*

The preceding response from the principal of Forest Primary School was congruent to what the other principals said regarding the funds in their schools. This was the situation that affected even the teachers that worked with the principal-cum teachers. Attending professional developmental workshops is one of the crucial activities which should be undergone by teachers: it is whereby they learn and develop the required skills and knowledge required in their practice. The situation of scarce funding makes it very difficult for the principal to make possible allowances available to the teacher so as to meet the expenses. Interestingly, there is a good lesson learnt: the teachers understand the situation and this is proven by the act of not accepting the allowance if it comes out of the principal’s pocket. With regard to this, I believe what makes them to understand is openness and transparency that the principal employed in the school, which has been made clear when she stated that she does not hide anything from them. This elicits the importance of making the situation known by the people that you work with so that they can co-operate with you.

#### *5.8.6. Scarcity of resources*

The scarcity of funds in the schools managed by these principals contributed negatively on the procurement of resources for the school. According to Mintzberg (1973), allocation of resources by the school principal is one of the ten roles in his set of principals’ roles. All the principals under study raised the concern about the physical resources in schools. In the previous paragraphs, it has been learnt that in some of the schools, the monies received was spent only on paying the auditor for the auditing fees and the school remained with very little funds. This is what made it difficult for them to purchase necessary equipment or adequate learner teacher support material (LTSM). The scarcity of LTSM and insufficient equipment and its impact was noted during my observation in schools. In Wetlands Primary School, the school did not have a photocopier and they only relied on the neighbouring schools for copies. During my stay there I saw her leaving the school for an hour and visit another school to make copies for LTSM and administration documents. I got the reason for her visit when I enquired about the meaning of her

action. Similarly, in Forest Primary School, the principal also ran to the nearby school which is about twelve kilometres away to make copies that were needed. This elicits the necessity of good human relations between one organization and another so that they are able to assist each other if there is a need.

#### *5.8.7. Inadequate resources for extra-curricular activities in schools*

The scarcity of funds in the schools under study did not only negatively impact on the infrastructure and the physical resources; it also spread over to the engagement of the schools in extra-curricular activities. The principals expressed a feeling that the schools that they managed could not participate in extra-curricular activities due to limitation of funds. Extra-curricular activities as one of the activities in the school, can be of great benefit in the school since it consists of many activities with which people involved can make a living.

PCT 4, the principal of Flats Primary School expressed herself in this way to make her point:

*“We cannot participate in sports because we do not have money for affiliation and transporting the learners to sports activities. Sometimes I think that if we were a big school we would be participating even in choral music but due to financial constraints we are unable”.*

With a similar feeling, PCT 5, the principal of Hills Primary School sadly expressed himself with this regard, he said:

*“This is very tough because we do have the relevant skills to assist the learners and we are prepared to journey with them. We always practice internally but we cannot afford to go and participate at a ward or circuit level. This really discourage me because I always think that whatever I do I am going nowhere with it” (PCT 5.p.5).*

For the principal-cum teachers, their experience is very demotivating because whatever they do they labour in vain. However, the good thing is that even though learners in these schools do not go for the competitions of any nature, teachers do give them opportunities to engage themselves in extra-curricular activities internally. In three of these schools, observations were done during

the sports day which is a Wednesday and the principal-cum teachers were observed engaging themselves in training sessions of sports activities in their schools. PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School, was spotted training girls in netball, PCT 1 was also seen busy with the boys training for soccer and also PCT 2 was also spotted with her gospel music choir. These principal-cum teachers were hands on during these sessions. While the principal-cum teachers were busy with their teams practising, I also observed another barrier with which they were faced: the facilities on which they were practicing were not conducive for the purpose. They looked like fields that were specially created by humans not utilizing machinery.

The teachers also posited that they were also disadvantaged by the situation in their schools with regard to extra-curricular activities. The teachers had a concern that in their schools the number of learners was too low to make teams for sporting codes and as a result the teachers could not demonstrate their skills for sports.

PCT 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School expressed herself thus during the individual interview:

*“In this situation you sometimes feel that you are not doing enough to your learners. In this school you cannot even make them play soccer because they cannot make a team, even in cultural activities you are told about the minimum number of learners which we do not even make it. There is nothing that entertains the learners in this school”* (PCT 2.p.5).

In echoing with this, PCT 1, the principals of Forest Primary School stated this:

*“Life is very tough here, you sometimes think of going to the sports field with them but then the number of learners is too small and you are not sure what to do. Another thing is that sometimes when you think of going to the sports field with them you start of thinking about the gaps that you should be filling with them in their classwork”* (PCT 1.p.6).

According to the above cited responses, there is some element of dissatisfaction from the principals about the way the conditions in their schools hinder their opportunities to explore their skills in extra-curricular activities. The number of learners in these schools did not allow them to form teams with the learners that could go for organized competitions at the circuit level and this



was observed during my stay in Wetlands Primary School. There were circuit soccer competitions organized by the local municipality which were to be played by learners under the age of twelve. Most of the learners in the school were under twelve years but due to the fact that the school had few learners, they did not make a team that could go and represent the school in the organized tournament. In Hills Primary School, the principal was very active when it comes to choral music but he informed me that the situation in the school discouraged him to start the choral music choir because there were very few boys in the school that could sing the “fourth part”. However, in Flats Primary School, the principal did not complain about human resource as the barrier but she stated that she could not get time to involve herself in extra-curricular activities. All the opportunities that were available were utilized to perform her administrative roles because most of her time was spent in teaching and learning.

#### *5.8.8. Floor space*

During the study, another challenge that the principal-cum teachers raised as a matter of concern was the floor space. Two of these schools were one-classroom schools; one of them was a five-classrooms school but with only two classrooms in a good condition, one had five classrooms which were all used for teaching and learning and the last one had five blocks with each having five classrooms. However, in this school that looked big in terms of the size, only five classrooms were in a state of utilization and all the classrooms were utilized for teaching and learning. Therefore, in these schools the two crucial functions, teaching and learning as well as school administration were performed under one roof. In these schools special provisions had to be made for teaching and learning for the multi-grade class, certain sections utilized for administration and certain sections were utilized as store rooms. My own understanding as per my observations in these schools, is that the classrooms were utilized as multi-purpose classrooms.

PCT 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School expressed herself thus:

*“Working in this environment is a bit challenging especially in our school as you can see that we only have one classroom where everything takes place. All the grades learn under this roof, we cook in this room, we use it as a store-room and it is also used as an office. If the parent comes or the ward manager comes, we have to go outside to her car and meet there” (PCT 2.p.6).*

Corroborating with this response, the principal of Sloppy Primary School divulged:

*“It is very difficult in our case because everything happens in a small space. The classroom that I use is for Grade R but I also function here with my multi-grade class of Grade 4 and 5. In the very same classroom I also have an office where I keep my administrative documents” (PCT 3. p. 5).*

These responses showed how much the floor space became a barrier for the principal-cum teachers in other schools. In those schools everything happened under one roof and there was no privacy. The challenges that the principal-cum teachers faced in the context of multi-grade schools created different emotions for them as practitioners in this practice; the emotions are discussed in the following section.

## ***5.9. Negative emotions for principal-cum teachers as a result of being involved in multiple roles in multi-grade schools***

### ***5.9.1. Principal-cum teachers dissatisfied about their performance***

The practice of the principals of multi-grade schools is very complex and has a lot of feelings and attitudes that arise as a result of playing multiple roles in the context of these schools. This is the practice that different people, either involved or not involved, have different perceptions about. The data generated proves that the principals involved in this practice have different negative emotions due to their engagement in this practise. The principals under study expressed that they were not satisfied about the way they performed their duties in the context of multi-grade schools. Their major concern was that they could not ensure balance between the two major roles placed in their care, which was teaching multi-grade classes and performing their administrative roles in schools. Principals under study hinted that most of their time was spent with the learners with the endeavour of ensuring that learners in their schools were not

disadvantaged by the situation. However, they also cited that due to the conditions they were sometimes compelled to leave teaching and learning and attend to other urgent matters that had to do with their administrative roles as principals of schools.

The principal of Wetlands Primary School, who handled three grades in the school had this to say during the individual interviews:

*“In fact if I can tell you the truth, I fail to manage all these roles correctly. Whatever we do, we do it but not to our satisfaction. You are not proud about what you have done, you do it but you see that your learner has not reached the level where you wanted him to reach because of the situation”* (PCT 2. p.1).

The preceding response from the principal-cum teacher has a number of revelations about the feelings and emotions of the principal who is involved in this practice. From this response I could learn that the principal could not ensure balance in managing the two crucial roles placed in her hands. The principal herself admitted that whatever task she did, was not done to her satisfaction and she made a very strong point that due to dissatisfaction she was not proud of her performance.

In strengthening this concern, PCT. 2 added to her response and said:

*“I feel very bad because if you are a principal you are expected to do things perfectly plus in the class, even if it can be that you as a principal you have one class but it is tough for you as a principal. When you are in-charge of a multi-grade class and also being the principal of the school, parents do not get all that they are supposed to get, the roles that are assigned to me as a principal are too much”*.

In making his point, the principal of Hills Primary School stated:

*“I am not doing according to the expectations of the policies for the curriculum and according to the requirements for administration and management of schools, there are many things that remain undone in our case because even the time is not enough. The slow learners do not get all what they are supposed to get from me as a teacher”*.

Sharing the same feeling, this is what the PCT 4 stated to express herself:

*“I feel very bad because my performance is not good, the administration side is not well attended to, I am unable to monitor teaching and learning in classrooms because I do not have time”.*

This is the feeling that PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School had and this is what she stated during the individual interview:

*“I cannot say I am performing well in school management tasks because I also feel that I am behind the schedule due to the fact that sometimes I must push on my class work with my learners. My involvement in multi-grade teaching forces me to spend most of my time in teaching and learning”.*

The responses from the principal-cum teachers indicated that the principals spent a big portion of their time in teaching and learning which made them to be unable to perfectly attend to their administrative roles in schools. The data revealed that due to this situation the principals became emotionally hurt when they saw that they had not reached or achieved the expectations of the society from them as teachers. This then tells me that in the context of the multi-grade school, it is very difficult to perform all the roles placed on you as the principal of the school and the multi-grade class teacher. Bearing in mind that in this context, it is not only teaching and learning and school management roles placed on you, there are also other duties that principals in this context engage themselves in due to some forcing circumstances.

#### *5.9.2. Demotivation and discouragement caused by non-support*

Another feeling that could be learnt was demotivation and discouragement of the principal-cum teachers. This could be drawn from the responses that were given by the involved principals in the study. Demotivation and discouragement was a result of non-support by the stakeholders that were supposed to have contributions towards the healthy living of the school as an organization. In this chapter, it has been cited for several times that in the schools there was lack of support either from the district office or the parents as stakeholders. It was realized that the parents as

stakeholders did not understand the situation in schools where their children went for schooling; if they did understand, they ignored it.

The principal of Wetlands Primary School is one of the respondents that raised this issues and this is what she stated:

*“Parents always complain about me having to attend meetings regularly and being absent from school, they do not understand the situation. When you call them for meetings to try and explain to them about the situation and matters related to the school, they do not come. Most of them work in the farms, they start at 8H00 and finish at 17H00 in the afternoon, they do not have time, and they cannot help us at all. Even if you write a letter, there is no response. They do not commit themselves” (PCT 2, p.3).*

This is the situation that discourages the principal of the school and it is reduced to operating her own school, one that she has to manage solely. Negative responses that the parents or guardians always sent to schools also contributed to this feeling. It then becomes sad when the people that have been invited as stakeholders begin to be available only for criticism or complaint when they are not satisfied. With regard to this, parents and guardians come in two different forms, as non-available for support as stakeholders but as available for criticism or showing their dissatisfaction. This is the situation that really created disillusionment with the principal-cum teachers involved in the study.

In echoing misunderstanding of the situation and non-cooperation by the parents as stakeholders, this is what PCT 3 stated during the individual interview:

*“The community does not understand, they are ignorant and they do not understand other things. I convene meetings for parents just to tell or induct them about issues and they do not come. I say this because last year there was time when I was discouraged because social workers came to school for concessions, they came to deal with learners that were identified and the parents were aware. But the parents complained about the involvement of the social workers in the school and said we wanted to take their children to special schools” (PCT 3, p.4).*

In this response, the picture that was portrayed is that in order to deal with misunderstanding that parents had in the context of the schooling system, the principal attempted to convene a meeting

of developing understanding but she received a negative response from them. With regard to this, PCT 3 made an endeavour to perform the information dissemination role as spelt out in Mintzberg ten management roles but the parents as the target group to receive the information responded negatively by non-attendance. This act of not attending to meetings convened by the school to provide learners with information leads to poor and negative attitudes from parents who are not well informed about issues relating to their children.

Another possible contributing factor to demotivation of principals involved in this situation was non-support by the Department of Education. The principal-cum teachers involved expressed that they felt deserted in this complex practice in which they were enmeshed because even the department did nothing to assist or motivate them in this unusual practice. One of the principal-cum teachers, PCT 3 stated this during the individual interview:

*“No support the department provides us with, nothing at all. The only thing they do is to send us the annual survey form which is sent annually requesting for information pertaining to multi-grade teaching in schools. We respond to those questions about multi-grade teaching and thereafter nothing happens. You end up asking yourself why I provided the information if no intervention will be done to attend to issues that have to do with multi-grade teaching in schools”* (PCT 3, p.5).

The issue of the annual survey was also one of the issues that came up during the focus group interview. All principal-cum teachers expressed a concern about the annual survey that is always sent to schools. Their main concern was the section of multi-grade is not attended to after the survey is collected from all the schools in South Africa. From this I could learn that the teachers got demotivated due to this act of silence even after they had submitted the survey to the National Department of Basic Education (NDBE). The teachers expected programmes of intervention and assistance to attend to issues affecting their unfamiliar practice in the context of multi-grade schools. Teachers in multi-grade schools believed that support and relevant training from the Department of Education could make a difference in their practice. My findings regarding this matter are harmonious with findings from the studies conducted by Jordaan and

Joubert (2007) and Subramanien (2014). This indicates that multi-grade teachers and principals are left to explore and learn multi-grade teaching pedagogies and management on their own through the solitary experiences in their remote schools. I am for the suggestion that was made by Jordaan and Joubert (2007) where they maintain that all evidence suggests that teachers teaching in multi-grade schools should receive specialized training for effective education in such schools.

### *5.9.3. Fear for future*

During data generation, the principals expressed a feeling of the fear for their future which according to them was not clear. The study was conducted during the period when the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education was busy with its Transformation of the Schooling System in the province, which had one of its purpose being phasing out multi-grade schools in the province. This then became one of the issues that the principals of multi-grade schools raised as a concern. The principals feared for their future and amongst all of them there was a very high degree of uncertainty. The merging of schools was always cited by the principals during the process and they were worried how feasible would it be.

PCT 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School, had just started in her new position as the principal of the school after the resignation of the principal in the school. She is one of those people that were uncertain about their future due to Transformation of the Schooling System in the province. This is what she stated during the individual interview:

*“I do not want even to think about the future because as the principal of this school I do not know what the Transformation of the Schooling system comes with to me. We have been to a number of meetings for it and we were informed that the small schools will be closed but we do not know how will it be implemented and we are going to be spread as teachers”* (PCT 2, p.4).

In corroborating with the concern for the threat of closure for the school, this is what PCT 5 stated:

*“This TSS on its own is a problem, I do not know when will it start and how will it be implemented but I do not see myself moving to another school to go and start new life there, I am very old now, if it happens I will have to resign because I cannot go and work in a place that I am not familiar with” (PCT 5.p.4).*

In this practice, due to the initiative of the provincial department of transforming schools, the affected principals worked under fear of the closure of their schools. PCT 2 was also concerned about the process of implementing the programme that would be utilized by the Department of Education. In the meeting which she attended, they were told that this was the plan but nothing was said about the implementation process and that also contributed to the degree of uncertainty.

During the focus group interview, this was one of the issues that the principals also shared their feelings about. Listening to them talking about it, I could feel that it was a nightmare to them because they did not know what was packaged for them in the future.

PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School raised a number of concerns about this during the session; one of the things she spoke about was the role that she would be playing if the department decides to implement the process. She was not sure whether where she would be placed, would be the principal or working another principal. Another point of concern she had was the possibility of changing managing circuits and districts during the process which would make her leave her home and be closer to the new school. She expressed herself thus during the focus group interview:

*“I do not imagine myself moving out and go to another school. In that school, you do not know how you will be treated and you are not even sure what role you will be doing. It will even be worse when you are taken to a school in another circuit or district, it means I will have to leave my family and go there but we will see when time comes. But I am very stressed about this” (PCT. 3. FGI. p.4).*



However, as much as all the principal-cum teachers feared for their future, I could sense that some of the principals looked at it from all the angles and dimensions. They went beyond looking at themselves, their families and their welfare and they looked at the child as the beneficiary for the teaching and learning process in the school. Two of them, PCT. 1 and PCT. 4 cited that merging the schools for them could enhance issues of quality education for learners in schools. Their responses were associated with the difficulties, challenges and experiences that have been discussed previously in this section. They believed that if the schools could be merged with other schools there would be proper organograms in the new hosting site because the numbers would have increased and the school would qualify for adequate management posts. Due to the existence of the new management post, one person would be the principal of the school and another person would be responsible for the curriculum matters, which is being the Head of Department. The two principals both agreed that this would enhance smooth functionality in the school where there would be proper school management and effective curriculum management by people who have enough time to perform the tasks assigned to them.

To express her opinion, this is what PCT 4 stated:

*“I like it when they are closed because I think it will be for the betterment of the children. If you can take my learners in my school and combine them with learners from ABC School, they can make an HOD who will help in monitoring teaching and learning. The principal will have subjects that he will teach in the classroom and also have enough time to focus to his/her administrative roles”* (PCT 4.p. 5).

To concur with this, PCT 1 expressed herself thus:

*“It will be a bad thing if they close it but it can be of the best for the learners because learners are not getting everything. If it will be closed and learners sent to the school where they will be taught by the teacher in front of them all the time, it will be a good thing. Our learners in the multi-grade do not get everything that they are supposed to get. I do not have a fear for my position”* (PCT 1. p. 6).

#### 5.9.4. *Principal-cum teachers belittled and undermined*

During the study, the principals also felt that in some instances they were being undermined by other principals within their fraternity. Their engagement in multiple roles in schools as multi-grade teachers and principals of schools was one of the contributing factors that the principal-cum teachers thought contributed to this situation. Principals believed that due to the fact that in schools, they spent most of their time in teaching and learning, they were not recognized as principals by other principals but considered as post level one teachers. The sizes of the schools that they managed was also a factor which they believed contributed to them being undermined, they cited that other principals did not recognize their schools as proper schools.

In citing about the attitude of principals towards them as principals of multi-grade schools PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School expressed herself thus during the individual interview:

*“The issue of attitude is very sensitive, some principals are good to us but some are not and I do not even want to talk about it. Some principals undermine us as if since you are managing a small school, your mind is also small and you are not clear about other issues that have to do with leadership and management. Some principals take this issue of the Transformation for the Schooling System as a joke. In one meeting as principals we had to discuss about the importance of logos as school symbols, the SEM was complaining that some schools did not include logos in their letterheads. One of the principals loudly said it is these small schools and that is why they are getting closed. That was stated without even having the names of schools in front of him. As principals of small schools we were hurt” (PCT 3.p.5).*

In echoing with this response, the principal of Wetlands Primary School sadly stated this during the individual interview:

*“We are being undermined, there is that, sometimes when you do something you get comments like you must copy from the big schools, even our management says that. We end up doing the wrong things because we have been told to look at the big school. When you submit, you find that*

*your submission is wrong due to the fact that you had to look at the big school. Principals of big schools know that everything for us is small like our schools” (PCT 2.p. 4).*

In corroborating with the preceding responses, to make emphasis on this point, PCT 5, the principal of Hills Primary School stated this during the focus group interview:

*“We are undermined in various ways, it is like even your education as the principal of the multi-grade school is low. In the meetings we are not allowed to talk, it is like we are very less experienced in issues that have to do with management. It becomes like those people from big schools are better than us as principals of small multi-grade schools” (PCT 5.p. 6).*

In these responses from the different principals involved in this situation a number of issues could be drawn. The fact that these principals manage small schools made them not to be accepted as principals with “full status”, they were categorized as post level one teachers according to the remarks made by other principals. As a result their unpleasant engagement in this practice led them to be always ridiculed by other principals and not considered as people that could have great input in leadership and management. This is the situation that leads them to being silenced during debates in their meetings since their views are least considered due to their management of small schools. Another issue which could be learnt from this is that these principals operated in a dilemma where they were told to look at another person and only discover that at the end what they had taken or copied was wrong. From the responses that I received from the principals involved what I could draw is that in many cases they were being excluded or ostracized in a number of programmes that they believed they could be included in simply because they were from small schools.

## **5.10. Conclusion**

This chapter looked at the roles that principal-cum teachers play in schools and how they experience their engagement in multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools. Their roles ranged from being class teacher, school principal, cooks, security guard, etc. It has also been learnt that there was no formal starting and finishing time for these principals. A number of challenges and emotions of principal-cum teachers have been discussed. Floor space, limited

funding resulting to limited resources, lack of support from parents and district officials, fear for future and multi-tasking were some of the challenges learnt. It has also been learnt that the PCTs were demotivated, and also undermined and underestimated by other stakeholders. The next section focuses on the strategies on how the PCTs seek to better lead and manage multi-grade schools.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SURVIVING STRATEGIES FOR PRINCIPAL-CUM TEACHERS

#### *6.1.Introduction*

The preceding chapter focused on the discussion of findings regarding the first research question of the study which intended to explore the daily roles of the principal-cum teachers. In the exploration it has been revealed that principal-cum teachers' practice is surrounded by complexity and they are faced by multiple roles within one day of their practice as practitioners in the multi-grade educational organization. Furthermore, the analyses for the first question revealed that there are also multiple challenges that are experienced by these principals in this practice and the person that faces these problems in the context of multi-grade school is the principal.

This chapter addresses the second research question which reads thus: How do the principal-cum teachers seek to lead and manage their roles? This section reports on the strategies that are employed by the principal-cum teachers to perform their multiple roles in this practice and also looking at other ways they employ to normalize things in their practice. In this section I focus on the strategies employed during teaching and learning as the core-business of the school and also strategies employed to perform administrative, leadership and management roles. For these principal-cum teachers, teaching the learners is one of their key roles in this context but for them it is blended with leadership and management roles which is also a key role that they play as the heads of institutions. Therefore, having these two functions performed simultaneously and being regarded as their key roles makes it important for me to explore as to how they manage them in this context. The analyses reveal that the principal-cum teachers employed a number of strategies in the context of multi-grade schools. They are discussed below.

## ***6.2.Sacrificing their spare time***

The data revealed that in order for the principal-cum teachers to attempt providing learners with all the content that they were supposed to get at school, they sacrificed their own spare time to perform their extra teaching roles and perform their administrative roles. Little (2001), Mulryan-Kyne (2004), Anderson and White (2011), Taole (2012) and Taole and Mncube (2014) affirmed that time allocated for subjects as per prescripts in educational policies suits a mono-grade context and conflicts with a multi-grade class context. Findings for this study are also consistent with their view. All the participants in the study echoed that time allocated for subjects was suitable for mono-grade classes and not for multi-grade classes; therefore, in order to attempt filling all the gaps, the PCTs utilized their own spare time as a strategy for coping with the situation and ensuring that learners received all the content they were supposed to get as per the requirements of their grade levels. The principal-cum teachers utilized their early morning time for teaching and learning before the normal school hours started. In making his point, PCT 5, the principal of Hills Primary School stated this during the individual interview:

*“In order for me to try and cover all the subjects that I teach to my Grade 5 and 6, I end up using the morning hours before the normal starting time and the afternoons to stay with my learners. Without utilizing these hours, life is impossible for you in the multi-grade context. You see, in a normal class, you get learners who have problems with learning and you give them some time and you do not finish, how much more in a multi-grade class situation, you really need to make plans of getting closer to them so that you make sure that you reach your goals by creating time for extra classes”* (PCT 5, p.6).

In echoing this, the principal of Flats Primary School stated this during the focus group interviews:

*“In this situation you need to weigh options and see what will work the best for you. As a principal you strive for the best for your school. As a person who handles grades that write ANA, I always make sure that I give myself enough time to focus on those two subjects so that I do not get surprised when time for this assessment comes. I make my learners come at seven o’clock in*

*the morning whereby I focus on the two subjects or I also use my time which is after three in the afternoon and stay with them to try and push wherever we are behind with” (FGI.p.5).*

From the preceding responses, it could be drawn that the principals had a passion for the work that they did and they decided to go an extra mile in the practice by sacrificing their own time. The acts of sacrificing with own time shows how much the principal-cum teachers endeavoured to make the mission of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education a reality. The emphasis made in the mission is to provide equitable access to quality education for people of KwaZulu-Natal to such an extent that they become well educated, skilled and highly developed citizens. The issue of equality is also encapsulated in the Bill of Rights which is Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa. In the Bill of Rights emphasis is made that all citizens should be equally treated irrespective of what the situation and the conditions are. In addition to this, this attempt by the principal-cum teachers is seen as a strategy utilized by the principal-cum teachers to achieve the goals for Education for All (EFA) as one of the policies applicable internationally. Their engagement in extra classes and utilization of their own time is what Hoyle (1981) cites about professionals when he distinguishes between the restricted and the extended professionals. The principals under study engaged themselves in extended professionalism when they decided that they did not only use their stipulated hours for teaching and learning and utilized their own time for the benefit of the learners as main clients.

### ***6.3.Special provisions made for learners***

One of the principal’s roles as spelt out in the principals’ roles by Mintzberg (1983); SASA, 84 of 1996 and EEA 76 of 1998, is to represent the school whenever it is required of him or her and this is twinned with the liaison role that s/he has to play in the school environment. The principal is expected to represent the school in meetings and professional bodies as the liaison person between the environment and the school; therefore these are the roles that the principal cannot avoid whether s/he likes it or not. In big schools, where there is adequate personnel, if the principal is away performing these roles it does not impede seriously; however, in small schools

when the principals have to move away it has an impact particularly to learners who look at these principal-cum teachers for tuition.

In exploring the provisions that the principal-cum teachers made when they were away from schools, I was able to learn strategies that the principal-cum teachers employed to make sure that during their attendance at official assignments the culture of teaching and learning continued and the learners were not disadvantaged by the situation. The data exposed that the principal-cum teachers put a high level of endeavour in making this possible. Attending ward principals' meetings is one of the activities which the principal cannot neglect; it is compulsory for him or her to go for that meeting since it is where crucial matters pertaining to leadership and management are discussed. Attending professional development sessions organized by the Education Department cannot be ignored by the teacher responsible for the class. Provisions made by principals to ensure that learners were not disadvantaged by the situation with this regard were considered for analysis. To express themselves the participants identified different methods that they used.

PCT 2, the principal of Wetlands Primary School, reported as follows during the individual interview:

*"If I hear of the meeting while I still have time I organize work that I will leave with the teacher, as I have said that the teacher that I work with plays a major role, I give her work that she will give to the learners. When I come back I check with learners then I start with those that could not perform well in the activities given"* (PCT 2, p.6).

In corroborating with the preceding response, PCT 1, the principal of Forest Primary School had this to say:

*"If I have to attend the meeting, I write work on the board the previous day so that Ms Shirley can tell them in the morning to write the work on the board. I let Ms Shirley supervise them when I am away. Sometimes I give her pages in the workbook so that she can give them what they will write in workbooks"* (PCT 1 p. 5).



PCT 4, the principal of Flats Primary School stated this with regard to corroborating with the preceding responses:

*“Sometimes I leave them with work, it is much better when there is someone that is a volunteer at that time or in service training. Even though the person won’t be like me but she is able to supervise the learners so that they do not poke each other’s eyes” (PCT 4.p.5).*

From the above responses what I could learn is that the principal-cum teachers made provisions by writing some work on the board for learners on the previous day to prepare for their absence on the following day or they selected certain pages in the workbooks for written work. During the period they were absent, people that remained responsible for supervision were the PL 1 teachers who worked with the principal-cum teachers. This elicits the importance of better equipping the teachers who work with principals in this context. Due to this situation, the PL 1 teachers became engaged in supervising extra classes. This then tells me that in order for this to be possible in the school, there is a great need for good human relationship between the principal and the teacher with whom s/he works. In bigger schools, relationships can be weak and find that very little harm is caused, which is unlike in small school schools whereby those two or three people are interdependent. In the response by the principal of Flats Primary School, I also learnt that she was sometimes fortunate to have volunteer teachers who came to school for assistance and she also cited the utilization of personnel that came for in-service training. In her case particularly because the people that came for in-service training were people who came for office based administrative roles, I believe it costs her to convince them before they could buy into her appeal and come to her rescue.

The responses from the principals were also echoed by the responses from the Post Level One teachers who worked with them in schools. The Post Level One teachers were asked about the contributions that they had in the functionality of the school. Amongst the responses that they gave, the issue of supervising learners was one of the dominating contributions they made. They all candidly cited that they remained with the learners when the principals were away.

Ms Shirley, the PL 1 teacher working at Forest Primary School expressed herself thus:

*“She (referring to her school principal) comes early to school, she writes work on the board, maybe she will leave something behind telling me what they are going to write while she is away. Sometimes when she is away she phones me telling me what the learners must be doing, making sure that while she is away learners are busy doing something. I then have to supervise all these eight grades, including four of mine and four of hers”.*

Ms Tiny of Wetlands Primary School divulged this to corroborate with the preceding response:

*“I know that it is my responsibility to supervise the learners when she is away, if I do not do it, who will do it because it is only the two of us in the school. She leaves work on the board and I make sure they write and I do marking. I know when she comes back from the meeting there will be something else new to do so I must help her if I can”.*

These responses expose the critical roles that the Post Level One teachers play in ensuring that teaching and learning continues even in times when principals are away. The act of assistance by these teachers indicates that they understand the situation in the multi-grade schools where they work and understand that it requires their contribution. This is in line with what Wenger (1998) claims about a practice being a shared enterprise. In this situation, the principal-cum teachers experience assistance from the post level one who have accepted that their situation requires mutual engagement from them as people operating within this unpleasant phenomenon.

The involvement and the contributions of the Post Level one teachers that worked with the principal-cum teachers were also noted as one of the factors that made life possible in the multi-grade schools. From the data generated, I could infer that the principal-cum teachers believed in the utilization of these teachers in supervision of the learning processes whilst they were committed in other duties and also delegated other responsibilities to them whenever it was possible. This advanced the Post Level one teachers who worked in these schools because they were being exposed in leadership and management roles without being in management positions in schools. It has also been revealed in the study that the Post Level one teachers in the study opted on their own to assist and utilize their own time towards making life easy in the multi-grade schools. The teachers working in this environment are overloaded with a number of roles that they perform in this context; however, there is a good story about their situation. Although

they have multiple roles it can be learnt that their professional growth benefits through their engagement. In terms of knowledge and the skills, they benefit a lot because they get opportunities of engaging themselves even in management roles. This is in line with distributed leadership as advocated by Gronn (2000) and Gunter (2005).

At Hills Primary School, during the observation phase, a District official came to meet with the school principal who was in the classroom at the time. The principal instructed the learners to turn to a certain page in their workbooks to write an exercise. After he left to the office, the Post Level One teacher took over without being told and supervised the learners - as a result she supervised the two classes simultaneously. In addition, during the period of generating data, it was time for the renewal of the child support grants received by children. While I was at Sloppy Primary School, five parents came at the same time and requested the principal to fill in the confirmation of schooling forms for them to be submitted to South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). Being guided by the Principles of Batho Pele, in South Africa, with one principle being courtesy, the principal had to attend to them promptly. The Post Level One educator took over and supervised learners. This triggered me to believe that this supervision had been part of the school culture in small multi grade schools.

The data also proclaimed that the principals also made some provisions for learners when they had to attend to some urgent matters that arose unexpectedly within the school. During the individual interviews it became clear that at some stage the principal-cum teachers multi-tasked within the same period. Multi-tasking that I am referring to is performing both the teaching and learning role twinned with administrative roles for their management positions as the heads of institutions. It was evident that in order for principal-cum teachers to try and meet the requirements they had to commit themselves in multiple multi-tasking at the same time.

PCT 2 claimed that during the beginning of the year when she has to capture data for learners in the SASAMS, she utilizes her teaching period to gather information. She insisted that she gave

the learners something to write while she worked on the computer updating the information. When expressing herself, this is what she divulged:

*“I am the main person that has to load information for learners in the computer, the other teacher is computer illiterate. What I do is that I give my learners something to write and while they writing I call each of them so that they can provide me with information, there is nothing that I can do because I do not have a clerk”* (PCT 2, p. 6).

With similar experience, this is what PCT 5 stated regarding multi-tasking while teaching:

*“As I am busy with learners in the classroom and I know that I have something to submit what I do is to get all the forms that need to be filled in and complete them while they are writing. I know that as soon as they finish writing I am also about to finish my paper work, there is nothing that I can do because I do not have time to go to the office”* (PCT 5, p.5).

Corroborating the above responses, this is what PCT1, the principal of Forest Primary School stated:

*“When I have something to submit to the office, I give learners something to do, written work or let them take their exercise books and turn to a certain page and make them read a poem or something of that nature and I go to the office. I do not go there to stay but I go there and fetch what I want and come back to the classroom and while I am working on the document I also supervise the learners”* (PCT 1, p.4).

All the principals in the study indicated that during the normal school hours in the day, they focused on their classroom but if circumstances forced them to perform certain administrative roles they did that in order to meet the deadlines. This was observed in these schools when I generated data. Another thing that could be noted is that as they kept on citing “offices” they did not mean the real decent offices but they meant corner offices or tables in their classrooms where they kept their forms for administrative purposes.

#### ***6.4.Utilization of after school hours for administrative purposes***

The core business of the school is curriculum management therefore if this is the core business it then requires to be properly managed. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Principals Management Development Programme (2012) stipulates that one of the key roles that the principals of schools must perform is curriculum management. Moreover, the KwaZulu-Natal Education Summit 2015 agreed on the ten pillars that will transport the Education Department to year 2019 and curriculum management by principals is one of those pillars. Therefore, in schools, it is then vital for principals to ensure that this receives their attention as a crucial role. In this study, the participants revealed that they did not get time to perform their role of managing the curriculum thoroughly because they were also full time involved in handling their multi-grade classes. As it has been uncovered in the preceding chapter that one of the challenges that the principals raised as a concern is time and among the roles that do not receive their attention due to time constraints is curriculum management. However, the principal-cum teachers had their own ways of trying to manage it.

The principal of Flats Primary School stated this during the individual interview:

*“Sometimes I take my time and not finish on the time that I am supposed to finish at on that day. For instance if I have told myself that I want to manage teachers’ files, I take an extra hour after school hours so that I can check them thoroughly”* (PCT 4, p.4).

In echoing the preceding response, this is what the principal of Sloppy Primary School stated:

*“I have made it a norm in our school that teachers submit their files to me at 14H00 on Mondays so that I am able to attend to them after 15H00 which is the only time available for me to attend to them. I always tell them that if they are going to write a test they should also do the same so that I get enough time for moderation”* (PCT 2, p.5)

The responses above elicited how the principal-cum teachers endeavoured to manage curriculum implementation in their schools. The solution that they opted for to perform this role was the utilization of their spare time due to their load of multi-grade classes. They could only monitor curriculum implementation by looking at the teachers’ files and according to the information that

was provided to me they could not get the opportunity for classroom observations. For those teachers who shared the same roof with them, that was only when they were observed and there was no formal classroom observation with proper records kept.

#### ***6.5.Principal-cum teachers performing administrative roles in their homes***

All the principal-cum teachers in the study reported that due to their commitment in class teaching of a multi-grade class, they did not have enough time to stay and perform their administrative roles. They claimed that they performed their administrative roles in their homes after school and spent all their time at school on teaching and learning.

In expressing her response, PCT 4, the principal of Flats Primary School stated this:

*“At school my schedule is very tight, I have my teaching and my management roles which both require my attention. Management needs its own time and teaching needs its own time. It means I do the administrative management roles at home and do the teaching roles at school”* (PCT 4.p.4).

The principal of Forest Primary School, (PCT 1) reported thus:

*“You even end up working on weekends doing some school work, you end up using your own family time to fill the gaps for administrative roles. I always do my work at home and at night. I overwork both at school and at home to meet the deadlines”* (PCT 1.p.4).

This issue also came up during the focus group interview when the participants shared their experiences about it. This is what PCT 5, the principal of Hills Primary School stated:

*“Sometimes you feel as if you must increase the number of hours in a day to be able to perform all the administrative roles assigned to you. It is very tough when you have to draw up the strategic plan for the school, you need enough time because it is like you put the whole school in front of you. You then end up requiring more time even at night to draw a plan that will be implementable. In our case it is very tough because even with the ideas we are limited because we are a small number”* (FGI. p. 6).

The data shows that in order for the principal-cum teachers in the study to try and ensure balance on the roles that they played, they utilized their hours after school or their own time during the weekends. This is an act of commitment and dedication. Utilisation of extra hours by the principals indicated that the principal-cum teachers were prepared to share their own family time with the schools that they managed. The situation in which they were enmeshed compelled them to utilize whichever opportunity they got to perform their school administrative roles.

#### ***6.6.PCTs use leisure and early hours for holding meetings***

From the data generated, it was revealed that in these multi-grade schools where principals were also engaged in handling multi-grade classes there was no time for holding formal meetings with the staff members due to the engagement of principal-cum teachers in handling multi-grade classes. All the principals stated that they did not have enough time to hold formal meetings for planning, discussion of education issues and updating staff member about urgent matters. The issue of time and pressure behind made this exercise difficult to take place whereas in a meeting the principal is able to meet with the staff and discuss certain matters together and collegially take decisions that are binding to everyone (Bondesio & de Witt, 2002). Meetings of this nature can also contribute to staff morale. However, in a multi-grade school context, conditions restrict the practitioners in the way they conduct their meetings.

The principal of Flats Primary School affirmed this during the individual interview:

*“I cannot get time to hold formal meetings with the teachers in our school, I end up holding our meeting during our tea breaks at school. While we have our lunch boxes we discuss or hold a short meeting so that when the bell rings we go back to our classes” (PCT 4. p. 5).*

In line with this, PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School stated this during the individual interviews:

*“I know that when I arrive at school I do not have time to hold meetings with the teachers that I work with, we end up holding our meetings in the car while we drive to school. We discuss*

*everything and the minutes are written when we arrive at school, we have no choice but we have to look for a way out of this” (PCT 3.p.6).*

This also came up during the focus group interview. Scarcity of time to hold meetings was one of the barriers that also came up. In his response, the principal of Hills Primary School also commented that in the school where he worked, in order for meetings to sit, he always requested the teachers to come early so that they could discuss some of the crucial matters in their practice. He claimed that this was the only way due to the fact that during break time, the teachers would be busy supervising the learners and also utilizing the remaining time for their meals. This is what he stated:

*“The only way I can hold a meeting is in the morning before the teachers start their work for the day. What I like is that the teachers understand the situation and they know that when I have asked them to come early in the morning, we have something very important to discuss” (FGI. p. 6).*

The act of PL 1 teachers of understanding the situation and availing themselves to meet with the principal continues to deepen my understanding about the positive contributions that the PL 1 teachers have in multi-grade schools. In these schools, it has become a norm and a culture that meetings are held in the morning before everyone can go into his/her own corner for his/her daily routine. This then elicits the importance of the teachers in the school to understand the environment in which they operate. It is through stakeholders’ understanding that shapes or influence the school culture. The school culture then influences the norm as to how things should be done in the school depending to the needs of the school (Hopkins, Ainscow & West, 1994)

### ***6.7.PCTs engaged in fundraising***

One of the challenges that the multi-grade schools were faced with was the issue of limited funds which restricted and limited them in their practice. From the data generated, all the principals indicated that the funds determined through the National Norms and Standards for funding of schools to their school was insufficient to meet their daily needs to run the schools smoothly and effectively. One of the roles of the principal as spelt out by Mintzberg (1973) is allocating the



resources for the organization. Therefore, due to the scarcity of funds in the organization, the principals found it difficult to administer this role and that was when they had to apply their mind to make the resources available and ensure that learners were not disadvantaged by the situation. In this study, the principal-cum teachers employed a number of strategies in the endeavour of making resources available in the schools that they managed.

One of the strategies that the principals employed was fundraising within and outside the schools. Through fundraising, the schools were able to generate additional income for themselves which would supplement the grant received from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education which was insufficient to meet all the schools' needs. In this regard, the principals of multi-grading schools portray a good picture that in order to make things easy in the school that you manage, you do not have to wait for the Department of Education to provide all the time but you have to look for different avenues of making resources available.

To make her point with regard to fundraising, this is what PCT 3, the principal of Sloppy Primary School stated:

*"We always try to fundraise within the school whereby we sell snacks to the learners and the community members. Some of the things that we buy for the school are from the fundraised money. Last year we managed to buy things like analysis book and other administrative books from the fundraised money. Even though it is not a huge amount of money but it helps us"* (PCT 3. p. 5).

In line with the preceding response, the principal of Hills Primary School stated this during the individual interview:

*"Life is very difficult in our school due to the limited funds and we must always make other ways of making life easy in our school. Fundraising is one of the things that we do as the school to generate more money. We have bought pens, rulers and pencils that we sell to the learners who come to school without. We are able to get some money out of this and it helps us a lot because we are able to buy cleaning material and toners for our photocopier"* (PCT 5.p.7).

This also came up during the focus group interview where all the principals raised a concern that this situation of small enrolment figures disadvantage them towards getting enough money to meet their needs. During the focus group interview, PCT 1, the principal of Forest Primary School expressed herself thus:

*“There is no other way than fundraising within the school to make more money. If you do not fundraise, you end up being unable to run the school. You have to think for yourself and if you do not do that you will get stressed. Sometimes if we want to organize a certain event in the school, we give them donation leaflets which they take to nearby shops, their families and friends and request for donations” (FGI.p.6).*

From the above responses it could be learnt how much the principal-cum teachers attempted to make life easy in schools. It could also be drawn that the principals understood the background of the learners that they taught because in their endeavour to generate some funds for the schools, they did not request the parents or guardians to make any contribution or financial payments. From these responses, an extra mile travelled by the principal-cum teachers in making resources available in schools is also taken into consideration. In performing their role of allocating the resources, they went the extra mile and engaged themselves in fundraising activities to generate more income for the schools they managed.

### ***6.8.Saving and prioritising***

Saving and prioritising was also one of the strategies that the principals employed in order to purchase equipment of a huge value for schools. The study revealed that since these schools did not receive big amount of monies from the education department as grant, in order for them to purchase a certain equipment for a school; they saved money for the purpose for more than two years before they could purchase. The schools had learnt to live without utilizing that portion in that particular school year so that they could accumulate enough money to purchase equipment after a few years. In the role of procurement, the principal determines what will receive attention and what will not. This is in line with prioritizing as one of the strategies that the principals employed to manage in the context of multi-grade schools. From the limited funds the principals

generated through internal saving strategies, the principals were able to contribute towards allocating the resources for the schools as one of their paramount roles.

One of the principals that employed this strategy of internal saving is the principal of Flats Primary School. The following response explains how she managed to purchase the photocopier after saving some funds allocated to the school:

*“In order for us to buy the photocopier we have to save for three years before we buy it. You see this one that we have now was purchased in 2007 but now it is giving us problems. I have done the quotation and the new one will cost us R24 000.00. We started saving R 8 000.00 in 2012, we also saved R 8000.00 in 2013 and in 2014 we will save another R 8 000.00 and we will be able to buy it. That is how we afford to buy our photocopiers”* (PCT 4.p 3).

Sharing a similar experience, the principal of Wetlands Primary School expressed herself thus:

*“It took us five years to buy this computer that we use in our school. We had to save some money from the allocation allocated for equipment for a period of five years before we bought it. If we decided to buy it in one year it would mean that we should take all our basic allocation money for the year and use it for one item, it is better that we save and purchase whatever we believe is more important for us”* (PCT 2.p.4).

PCT 5 reported thus:

*“If you do not save, you cannot afford to buy the equipment that we want. It took us two years to buy this Riso Machine we have because we had to save half of the money required in the first year and in the second year we were then able to buy the machine”* (PCT 5.p.6).

These school managers managing in the unpleasant context of multi-grade schools developed their own styles when it came to procurement of goods in the schools. The strategy seems to be positively working for them in order to acquire Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) and equipment in schools. The data revealed that the principals ensured that they did not utilize other funds allocated for other purposes in the schools and instead they saved and prioritised.

Principals of schools stated that purchasing the item they wanted in one year would lead to the

utilization of all the funds allocated for the LTSM in the school. This then means that even the application for the viament of funds which is the process of officially requesting the utilization of funds allocated for a certain purpose for another purpose was impossible. Therefore, internal saving and prioritization was one of the strategies that they employed to make things easy in the schools that they managed.

### ***6.9.Maintaining good human relations***

Good human relationship between schools was also one of the key factors which contributed towards enhancing functionality in multi-grade schools. The relationship and the positive attitude shown by other principals towards assisting the principals of multi-grade schools contributed towards making the schools not to struggle when they required resources. The principals under study appreciated the contributions and the support that they always received from the bigger schools with adequate resources to help them. This was determined by the degree of external alliances that the multi-grade schools had with the bigger schools. Consultation by principals of small multi-grade schools to the principals of bigger schools prevailed and acknowledged as an enhancing factor to this external alliance.

The neighbouring schools contributed a lot with resources to the multi-grade schools which battled with the resources. In making her point regarding this matter, the principal of Sloppy Primary School expressed herself thus:

*“In preparing for ANA, ABC Primary School gave us a computer so that we could deal with all ANA issues. The relationship with other schools is very important and it helps us a lot because we are able to get the things that we do not have. Even with the material that I run short of I consult them, for instance XXX Primary School, gave us the laminating machine that we did not have”* (PCT 4. p. 5).

In corroborating with the preceding response, this is what the principal of Forest Primary School stated:

*“I always rely on other schools for the material that I do not have. I have some people that I know that they will not let me down when I request for assistance from them. I always run to these schools whenever I need something like photocopying tests papers and producing enough material for teaching and learning”* (PCT 1. p. 6).

In these responses, the role played by the neighbouring schools to assist multi-grade schools with material is elicited. In the previous chapter, when looking at the challenges of the multi-grade schools, it has been alluded that some principals of bigger schools do not recognize the principals of multi-grade schools as proper principals and they always ridiculed over them. However, in this section, there is a new revelation about the attitude of principals of other big schools who contribute positively towards making teaching and learning environment conducive in their neighbouring small multi-grade schools. This also exhibits that people’s personality is not the same. Their perceptions as well as their perspectives are not the same when it comes towards principals engaged in multi-grade school practice.

Good human relationships as an important factor that contributed to the smooth functionality in the school, also extended even to the community members who also contributed positively towards performing other roles in schools. The KwaZulu-Natal Government runs a programme which it runs concurrently with the Department of Co-operate Governance which is known as the Community Work Programme (CWP). In each governmental institution, there are employees stationed to render services on the school premises. According to the information provided, these people played major roles in the functionality of the schools. The principals utilized them in a number of ways when performing the roles that would have required the utilization of the school funds.

#### **6.10. Delegation of duties**

Managing a multi-grade school has shown to be a task with a lot of complications and complexities due to the scarcity of human resources in the organization. I reiterate this: in the context of small schools, there are very few personnel, particularly, personnel in leadership and

management positions. Execution of management roles becomes an issue which is directed to only one available person in the school which is the school principal. In this situation, this principal is not faced with only his/her management roles but s/he is also faced by a multi-grade class where s/he has to perform all the roles assigned to a classroom-based teacher. Therefore, these principals have to look for ways of being able to manage in this condition.

Delegation of duties to the Post Level one teachers working with the principal-cum teachers was one of the strategies employed in multi-grade schools.

When making her statement, this is what the principal of Forest Primary School stated regarding this issue:

*“Ms Shirley helps me a lot especially with the office work. Let us say, if I am going to the meeting, she is the one that remains with the learners and even with the office work like SASAMS. She is responsible for that because I saw that I cannot afford to move up and down to the workshops for SASAMS and so I delegated that role to her. She helps me lot, our relationship is very good”* (PCT 1.p.3).

The principal of Hills Primary School reported this regarding delegation of roles to Post Level One teachers:

*“These teachers that I work with play a major role to help me with the school management roles. Some of them have the skills that I do not have like computer skills therefore I delegate some duties to them. They help me a lot, one teacher with computer skills is responsible for SASAMS and one is responsible for receiving and another one is responsible for procurement and stock control. I know that whenever I need to do something on those issues that they are in-charge. I must go to them and give them instructions and the next thing I will go to get the information from them”* (PCT 5.p. 5).

From the preceding responses, I could understand that the principal-cum teachers believed in conducting skills analysis for the people that they worked with so that they could decide which roles could be delegated to them. The principals capacitated the Post Level One teachers that they worked with in such a way that they were able to assign some responsibilities to them.

According to Bester (1970) the principal delegates tasks to teachers according to his individual circumstances. The data revealed that the Post Level one teachers working in multi-grade schools become well equipped and developed in multiple areas of practice in the school environment. These schools are small but people that work in them are highly developed when it comes to skills and exposure in different aspects of education practice.

Delegation in the multi-grade context played a vital role in the functioning of the school and the findings indicated that it did not only end with the teachers but it also stretched to other personnel within the school. Two of the schools that were under study had security guards that were state paid who ensured safety and security of the human and physical resources in schools and also controlled the entrance points in schools. The research showed that in schools where these people were employed, they played crucial roles in the functionality of the school. The principals affirmed that in some cases these security personnel were utilized for supervision of learners and also for receiving deliveries within the school. The two principals in the study affirmed that these security guards contributed much by performing some of the roles that they should have been doing as principals of schools and also multi-grade class teachers.

At Hills Primary School, there was one security guard employed in 2009, assigned with his job description as stipulated by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. According to the information furnished by the principal of the school, this security guard was utilized to receive goods for the National School Nutrition Programme as well as receiving other material which is delivered to the school by other private service providers. The principal reported that the security guard did all the counting for him and he only verified and confirmed by appending his signature and affixing the school stamp. He asserted that this is not an easy task to delegate to someone but it requires a very high level of trust to ensure authenticity and trustworthiness. The principal stated that he had to develop and capacitate the personnel before this duty was assigned to him so that he could perform this task appropriately.

This is how the principal of Hills Primary School expressed himself making his point regarding this issue:

*“Our school is in an area where there is not too much people and cars coming in. Our security guard stays at the gate and does nothing for most of his time. Therefore I have trained him on how to receive goods for us, I have trained him on how to count the stock received. It took me a very long period of time to train him because I wanted him to be perfect when he does his work. I am very happy now because I trust whatever he does the way he is trained. I had no option, I had to use him so that I am not disturbed when there is delivery to be received during the period I am busy in the classroom” (PCT 5 p. 6).*

In line with the afore stated response, the principal of Flats Primary School reported this during the individual interview about the role played by the security guard in the school:

*“In order for me to meet deadlines I sacrifice the class and go to the office for a short period of time and then I ask the security guard to go and supervise the learners. Even then it calls for me to come early a day before and write some work on the board and then request the security guard to do the supervision” (PCT 4.p. 3).*

However, as much as the findings tell us that the principal-cum teacher delegate responsibilities to the personnel they work with, it has also been revealed in the study that delegation in the multi-grade school context is not easy and not always positively accepted by the teachers. In this context, teachers have their own responsibilities that they have to take and sometimes delegating more work to them is like they are being overloaded. When that happens, the principal-cum teachers then take over and perform that particular role as heads of institutions. This adds more workload on the principals who cannot leave things undone or unattended due to other people being unable to engage themselves.

The principal of Flats Primary School was one of the people who have experienced this in the context of multi-grade schooling and she expressed herself thus during the individual interview:



*“I do delegate some roles to other people but sometimes you delegate to someone and the person says no I will not be able to do that because I am overloaded, I have my own class. If the person has said no then there is very little that I can do, sometimes if I request them to go for me to workshops and if they say no because they are behind syllabus, there is nothing that I can do, I just go there myself. Sometimes if there is a meeting that requires one teacher from the school and it is not specific as to who it wants, if the person says I will not be able to go I cannot force him. I am the only person who cannot say no” (PCT 4.p.3).*

Sharing similar experience, PCT 2, the principal of Sloppy Primary School stated this during the individual interview:

*“I always try to delegate some duties to the teacher that I work with in the school. But the problem is that she is still new in the field and she is still scared to perform other duties because she is not sure, she does not take those responsibilities. I do not have another option, I take over and perform the duties so that I can meet the deadlines or I can submit timeously” (PCT 2.p. 5).*

From these responses it could be explored how the principal-cum teachers sometimes experienced delegation when none of their staff members, particularly the teachers accepted the responsibilities. In this practice, the principal-cum teachers understood the situation and they had various ways of facing reality. Consequently, when resistance from the teachers emerged, the principal-cum teachers were always prepared to face the situation as it was and executed the task as figureheads of the institutions and accounting officers.

One of the key factors contributing to strategies employed in multi-grade schools was the utilization of student teachers that were studying for teaching qualifications and other qualifications through distance institutions of higher learning. Two principal-cum teachers in the study announced that these people played an important role in the schools that they managed. In the two schools, there were two student teachers who had come to familiarize themselves with the school and classroom environment. The student teachers who were at schools were utilized in

supervision of learners while the principal-cum teachers were away. These student teachers spent most of their time in schools for the purpose of familiarizing themselves with the teaching and learning culture and therefore they were always accessible and working closely with the principals. Although the principal-cum teachers utilized these students in schools but they also incurred expenses in trying to meet the daily needs of the student teachers. The principal-cum teachers being aware that the students were either in school for teaching practice or in-service training, decided to give them something in return to appreciate the extra mile and the contribution that they made in schools. They gave them stipend and the stipend they gave to these student teachers was not prescribed by anybody or structure but it came from within the principals themselves through the spirit of „Ubuntu“.

To make her point, this is what PCT 4 reported during the individual interview:

*“If I have someone who studies through UNISA who has come to school for teaching practice, I utilize him a lot when performing my daily roles. The person attends to UNISA and I have that in mind she must get something for transport. I have no option because these people stay even if their term has expired but they continue which is very good for us. We use them and there is so much that they assist me with”* (PCT 4.p. 5).

In addition to this, this is what the principal of Forest Primary School stated to make her point regarding this issue:

*“Life becomes much easier for us when we have a volunteer in our school. It depends on what the volunteer is at school for. They help us a lot to run the school, I sometimes leave them in-charge of the learners whenever there is a need and sometimes if it is someone who has come for office based administrative duties, we then get relief because we know that there is someone in the office for administrative duties. I always pray that they extend their period of stay in the school because I know that we benefit from them”* (PCT 1. p.5).

This indicates how much the principal-cum teachers relied on the services for these personnel in schools.

### **6.11. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have looked at the various strategies that the principal-cum teachers employ to manage within the complex practise of multi-grade schools. From the responses given by the participants, I was able to draw a number of strategies utilized in managing in this context. It has been learnt that principals save and prioritise to buy equipment and also engage themselves in fundraising activities. They also use spare time to perform their multiple roles and also consider early hours of the day and afternoons to perform their administrative roles. There are valuable lessons that can be learnt from these principals regarding the ways of managing schools in the multi-grade context with their challenges. Hence, the following chapter focuses on the lessons that can be learnt regarding roles of PCTs, their practise experiences and ways of managing multi-grade schools.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### LEARNING FROM THE JOURNEY

#### *7.1.Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to present conclusions of the research. It is indeed the final stage for this work but the beginning of more related programmes for myself and other researchers in future. In this chapter I also attempt to develop understanding of what each chapter in this thesis entailed and how I experienced working with those chapters. When doing this, I do not intend repeating the whole chapter when dealing with each, but giving a picture of what is encapsulated in them. As explained earlier, it is in this chapter whereby I make my voice heard about multi-grade teaching and what I discovered during the study. My journey was not about everything in this practice of multi-grade teaching but specifically focused on the principal-cum teachers which is what I talk about the most in this thesis.

Internationally, there are scholars like Brunswic and Valerien (2004), Little (2006), Juvane (2007) and Bhardwaj (2008) who have spoken a mouthful about multi-grade teaching practice and spoken out for assisting multi-grade schools. However, in South Africa, Brown (2010) has indicated that the multi-grade education practice is an under-researched area. In attempting to contribute to Brown's assertion I then engaged in this study with the aim to explore principal-cum teachers' management and leadership experiences. In exploring this field, I had to look at their daily roles in this context and the challenges that they are faced with in this phenomenon. The studies conducted elsewhere have affirmed that the principals of small schools which have multi-grade classes are enmeshed in a number of multiple roles at the same time (Little, 2001; Jordaan & Joubert, 2007; Joubert, 2010; Tsolakidis, 2010).

Based on the rationale and the aims of the study, three critical questions were designed and they were as follows:

- What are the daily roles of the principal-cum teachers and how do they experience their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools?
- How do the principal-cum teachers seek to lead and manage their roles?
- What can we learn from what the principal-cum teachers regarding ways of better leading and managing such schools?

The first research question was utilized to explore daily roles in the context of multi-grade schools whereby they were responsible for multiple roles. It further extended to study their experiences as they performed their multiple roles in this context as discussed in Chapter Five of the thesis. The second research question focused on the strategies that the principal cum teachers employed in the management of their multiple roles in the multi-grade schools context as presented in Chapter Six. The third question, focused on the lessons that were learnt during the entire study. There is no specific data presentation chapter for this research question, it was specifically designed to construct conclusions from the study's findings which forms a big percentage of this chapter.

The literature on multi-grade teaching revealed that in many countries of Africa, a major rationale for multi-grade education is probably its potential to increase access to the full cycle of primary education in areas where this is currently not available (Berry, 2001). The literature revealed that in other countries like Australia multi-grade teaching is practised as a choice which is different to our country's situation where it is a necessity (Little, 2001; Taole, 2012).

According to the South African Department of Basic Education 2010 and 2011 Annual School Survey, in 2011, approximately 21% (5 339) ordinary schools had multi-grade classes. The majority of these schools were found in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Eastern Cape had 1 929 and KwaZulu-Natal had 815 schools. In the province of KwaZulu-Natal the two districts which had high percentages were Zululand and Sisonke. Zululand had 142 and Sisonke had 126 schools. The majority of these schools were two or three teacher schools and yet offered a full cycle of primary school. This study was conducted in Sisonke District which is one of these two districts which highest percentages of these schools. In these schools, where multi-grade teaching is practised, principals were fully engaged in teaching multi-grade classes, that has been evident

in studies conducted by Lumby and Azaola (2011), Taole and Mncube (2012) and Subramanien (2014).

I framed the study in Wenger's (1998) social practice theory. In this theory Wenger utilizes two concepts which he believes they play a key role. The two concepts are community and practice. In this study, I looked at the school as the community whereby the principal-cum teachers worked with other stakeholders like teachers and parents forming part of this community. The practice that I looked at is within the multi-grade school environment where the principal-cum teachers worked as principals of schools and multi-grade class teachers. I looked at this practice as a social entity but due to its complexity requiring contributions by other stakeholders. This resonates with what Wenger also cites about a practice where he states that sometimes it becomes a joint enterprise that requires mutual engagement from the stakeholders. I used this approach to explore how the principal-cum teachers experienced working with these stakeholders in this community. Coupled with the social systems theory was the capability approach by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000a). The capability approach allowed me to explore the principal-cum teachers in practice and how they managed to manage in multi-grade schools with their multiple functions. This was done considering the two key concepts in this approach which are capability and functions.

The study was suitable as a qualitative study which allowed me to generate adequate data for the study in the form of words (Punch, 2006; Niewenhuis, 2007). I employed the interpretive paradigm which I believed would allow me to work with data to reveal the essence of participants' experiences and reason for doing things the way they did things (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). I also adopted a case study design which is an empirical inquiry that investigates a specific phenomenon within its real life and considering multiple sources of evidence. The phenomenon in place was principal-cum teachers and their practice comprising of multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools. The research sites were schools where the principal-cum teachers were stationed. The principal-cum teachers were sampled due to their engagement in this practice. To generate data, three data collection strategies were employed and

they were individual interviews, focus group interviews and observations. To enhance issues of trustworthiness, I employed strategies suggested by Niewenhuis (2007) which is multiple data generation methods, tape recording of the interviews, member checking and prolonged and persistent engagement of the researcher in the research process.

Chapter Five and Six are the two chapters where the generated data was presented and analysed. Data analysis was conducted following the trend as recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) referred to as General process of Inductive Data Analysis. In this approach, the generated data was categorized and thematized to make sense out of it. Operating in an interpretive paradigm drove me to the process of deep scrutiny of the data before interpretations were made and by so doing I was attempting to ensure validity and trustworthiness of the research findings. In chapter five, it is where the data for research question one is presented, focusing on the daily roles of PCTs as well as their experiences as they are engaged in this unpleasant practice. Chapter six focuses on the data presentation and analysis for the second research question whereby I explore the strategies that the PCTs employ to manage schools with multi-grade classes conditions. Obviously this one is the last chapter which presents the lessons that are learnt through conducting this study and lessons learnt from the findings.

When presenting in this chapter, I do not present conclusions focusing on each research question at a time but I present lessons across the findings of the two first critical research questions. The approach employed focuses on the findings, interpretations, lessons, limitations and recommendations all being tackled in the same section. The next section presents conclusions based on the study.

## ***7.2. Lessons learnt from the study***

### ***7.2.1. Principal-cum teachers engaged in multiple roles***

Exploring the principal-cum teachers' experiences in the context of multi-grade school revealed to me that they operate in a very thorny and complex practice. PCTs played two crucial roles in the life of the school which was managing the schools and also teaching multi-grade classes. In each of these crucial roles, there are a number of sub-activities which the PCTs were compelled to play contributing to achievement of goals and purpose of the role. In this study, the PCTs swam in that pool trying to stretch their hands all over to effectively perform their roles. My findings were congruent with the findings of other researchers who have conducted studies in the context of multi-grade teaching in other South Africa's provinces. Little (2001), Jordaan and Joubert (2007), Joubert (2010) and Tsolakadis (2010) also found that the principals of small schools which have multi-grade classes are enmeshed in a number of multiple roles in schools.

According to the EEA 76 of 1998, the principal is tasked with a number of activities and areas requiring his/her best effort. Managing the school on its own is a role that requires its own undivided attention whereby a number of complex interconnected activities are played. Twinned with this is a multi-grade class with its string of assigned activities. Curriculum implementation also has to be given its best time as the core-business of the school and it is one of the areas on which the society makes judgements of quality and service delivery in the school. In the study, the PCTs were caught in the centre of these two crucial roles trying to ensure justice in their practice between the two quarrelling roles. I am using the word "quarrel" between these two roles due to the condition that in the context of multi-grade school, where the PCTs carry them simultaneously, they both demand his/her full attention. The findings showed a very high degree of intricacy and conflict of roles. In this practice, the PCTs experience multi-membership identity as principals of schools as well as multi-grade teachers and all of them require proper co-ordination. Wenger cites "multiple identities miss all the subtle ways in which our various forms of participation, no matter how distinct, can interact, influence each other, and require coordination" (Wenger, 1998, p. 159). This betrays how much conflicting the roles are in the context of multi-grade schools.



Looking at the core business of the school which is teaching and learning, it requires full attention from the implementer whereby the implementer has to be well prepared for implementation and there has to be organization and planning before it takes place. This highlights the importance of preparedness for the person to implement the curriculum. In this situation it is not a single grade that has to be taught but it is a multi-grade class that the principal-cum teacher has to prepare for. Looking at the vision of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, which advocates for equitable access to quality education for the citizens, I then begin to ask if these principals are able to make this a reality in this context of multi-grade schools. Principals engaged in this situation have to ensure that they do their level best to provide quality education because in the schools that they manage multi-grade teaching is a necessity not a choice. They have no other option but to ensure that goals of Education For All (EFA) which is ensuring access to quality education for all the citizens, are achieved. Daniel (2004) poses a very strong concern about syllabi implemented in multi-grade classes: he maintains they are not structured for multi-grade teaching classes and places a heavier work-load on multi-grade teaching teachers compared with their single grade teaching counterparts. Berry (2001), Joubert (2004) and Juvane (2005) all affirm with Daniel and contend that the conceptual and skill requirements of the prescribed curriculum are too great for the teacher to cope with, given the pressing problems and concerns which have to be addressed in the multi-grade teaching situation. These are the experiences that the PCTs have to face in their daily practice as curriculum implementers.

The preceding paragraph further elicits how detrimental or unfriendly the South African educational policies in the context of multi-grade schooling are. The policies like the National Assessment Policy Statements and National Protocol For Assessment utilized by the classroom-based teachers in the curriculum implementation treat implementers as the same and there is no provisions for multi-grade classes. The Norms and Standards for determining number of posts in schools treats all the schools as the same and the number of posts is determined by the number of learners enrolled in the school. Another policy is the National Norms and Standards for Funding

of schools. The manner in which these policies are drawn perpetuates complexity in the context of multi-grade school.

From the data generated, PCTs revealed that they spent most of their time in classrooms teaching their multi-grade classes and leadership, management and administrative roles were played during tea breaks, after school and over the weekends due to overload that they carried. This shows how much the PCTs endeavoured to ensure that learners received all what they were supposed to get. As much as it is stated that in South Africa multi-grade teaching is not a choice but a necessity, I believe it enlarges a burden to a person regarded a principal of a school to be given another load of a multi-grade class because both these two crucial roles are hectic and demanding. The same thing applies when the multi-grade teacher is also given another title and be called the principal of a school. How feasible and effective it is for a principal of a school expected to lead and manage the school meaningfully, driving all the programmes and processes in the school to also implement the curriculum in two or three different grades in the school? Is justice being done to learners taught by the principal-cum teacher and the school managed by the principal-cum teacher?

While these schools still exist and operate, we are still going to have practitioners experiencing managing schools and teaching multi-grade classes simultaneously in the South African context. I believe the nature of policies in place will determine the future of this practice and people enmeshed in it. Views of Rowley and Nielsen (1997) are being supported where they cite that the multi-grade model of education is receiving new interest and attention as a model that can provide a viable opportunity for educational delivery to help achieve the EFA goals; however, I strongly believe that the conditions under which this happens should be conducive for this to happen. I agree with Jordaan and Joubert (2007) in their study conducted in the Western Cape Province of South Africa with the purpose of investigating how multi-grade teachers can be developed to achieve the millennium development goals. One of the recommendations they made is that the challenge for academics and policy makers is to identify the relevant and

common policies out of relatively small scale interventions. In addition to this, the inclusion of principals of multi-grade schools in this process of required interventions can also add value.

### *7.2.2. PCTs are extraordinary leaders*

In the preceding section, it has been revealed that the PCTs are involved in a very intricate practice in schools whereby two very crucial roles in the school are played by them simultaneously. From the findings, it could also be seen how much the PCTs attempted to stretch their hands to ensure that they reached all those functioning areas. The endeavour they made and the best effort put into their practice portrayed them as extraordinary leaders in a complex practice, showed them to be “jack of all trades”. The PCTs performed many extra roles that required many skills, even the skills for jobs that were not part of their job description. In this practice, the PCTs are masters of multiplicity, and they know much of the learned trades and skills to bring their practice together in a practical manner in the multi-grade school context.

The PCTs did not only perform roles on their job description but in many cases they were seen playing multiple roles in this context which attests that in this practice you have to have an element of multiplicity in order to cope with the discourse. This multiplicity has to come from within so that the practitioner involved can continue to play the “multi-grade school practice game”. In this practice, these PCTs are referred to as extraordinary leaders because they played roles of security guards, cooks, counsellors, multi-grade teachers, principals of schools, curriculum specialists, administrative clerks, stock controllers etc. In normal schools, with adequate human resources, these roles are performed by different people with relevant expertise; however, in a multi-grade school environment, due to limited number of personnel, the PCTs were entangled in these roles. The ability of the PCTs to perform multiple tasks placed on them resonates with the capability approach as involved in the study (Sen, 1999). In the capability approach, the focus is on capability and functionings. Further elaborations are that a functioning is an achievement and capability is ability to achieve. In this study, I then regard the PCTs as extraordinary leaders due their ability to stretch their arms and perform their multiple tasks in the multi-grade school context.

In the social practice theory by Wenger (1998) what underpins everything, is understanding by the practitioner of the practice in which s/he is involved. Wenger defines the concept practice as doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do. In this study, I was then tempted to believe that the PCTs as extraordinary teachers were driven by deeper understanding of the situation of their unfamiliar teaching practice. I believe, in their practice, they employed the epistemological and ontological approach (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). The forces of the ontological approach in their practice would allow them to understand the nature and conditions of principalship in a multi-grade school context. The epistemological approach allowed them to understand the relationship they had with their multi-grade school practice. Applying this approach allowed them to be prepared to walk the journey in the multi-grade schools in a meaningful and engaging way. Blending their epistemological and ontological absorbed and learned values drove them towards performing multiple tasks not considering their job description. I would make a claim that it calls for a specific character of a person to manage a multi-grade school because there is no specific job description; the practitioner involved performs whichever role s/he comes across.

In the social practice theory, the character of identity as nexus of multi-membership refers to the way the person is able to reconcile his/her various forms of membership into one identity across boundaries (Wenger, 1998). In this case, I applaud the PCTs for being able to reconcile all their mentioned multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools and perform them under the name „PCTs“. These multiple roles encapsulate different identities and characters but in this context PCTs are able to blend everything together. In addition to this, Wenger (1998) speaks of the importance of the practitioner to learn in the practice where s/he is involved. In this study, PCTs are revealed being able to learn their practice and develop strategies of adaptability. One of the processes found in the community of practice is that the practitioners strive to understand and tune their practice. When the practitioners do this, they then align their engagement with it and learn to become trustworthy members of it. Furthermore, the practitioners do their level best to define their enterprise and reconcile what their enterprise is about. The PCTs showed an

understanding that their practice was about playing multiple roles in schools where they were stationed to make life possible in those schools.

Having spoken about the importance of epistemological and ontological approach in the multi-grade school context, I believe I need to hint at something important that I would believe it contributes within multi-grade school practice, particularly with principals of schools. Employing this approach, would lead to axiological values and ethics for multi-grade school context. It is only if we know the nature of the practice and the reasons for its existence we would be able to shape ourselves to fit in the practice. Blending the two together would lead to axiological values and ethics required for multi-grade school practitioners. I believe that practitioners who would enter in this practice without giving themselves enough time to think about this practice might find it difficult to fit in the discourse due to mind ill-preparedness. This resonates with Wenger (1998) where he states that in his theory he used meaning to characterize the process by which we experience the world and our engagement in it as meaningful. The base of everything is how we make meaning of what we are engaged in. In this study, I learnt how the PCTs made meaning of being involved in managing the multi-grade schools.

### *7.2.3. A challenging and complex practice*

In the preceding section, the PCTs are reported as extraordinary teachers who are able to stretch their arms with attempts of executing their multiple roles. However, as much as we say they are able to stretch their arms but there are functions where the PCTs admitted that they had problems of administering. Curriculum management is one of the roles that the principal of the school performs due to its relationship with the core business of the school, which is teaching and learning. From the study, the PCTs revealed that they found it difficult to perform this role due their engagement in multi-grade teaching which consumed much of their time. In curriculum management it is where the educational leader is able to guide and lead the practitioners towards the right direction for curriculum implementation, It is also where the educational leader is able

to detect challenges encountered by practitioners during the implementation process and thereafter the s/he would be able to design relevant intervention programmes to assist those implementers who encounter hardships. If then the PCTs disclose that they are unable to thoroughly perform such a crucial role in the context of multi-grade schooling system, it poses a concern. How can then the society be confident enough about the education offered in multi-grade schools where curriculum management does not receive its own adequate time? How do the teachers stationed in multi-grade schools professionally grow if the principals do not adequately support them? This then points out that no matter how small the school is, there is a need for one person who will be responsible for management issues so that there will be enough time to pay attention to all those leadership and management issues.

Curriculum management always involves actions of looking at the methodology employed by the teachers in the classroom and also the process of assessment. The phenomenon under study here involves teachers teaching multi-grade classes; therefore, I believe it would be ideal for educational leaders to look at how the teachers assess holistically in their multi-grade classes. Curriculum management is one of the processes that can assist the principal to be able to identify the areas of development in as far as assessment is concerned. However, in this study the PCTs claimed that time did not allow them to perform this role thoroughly. This takes us back to what I raised in the preceding paragraph about the need for one person responsible for curriculum management in schools. This would be ideal to ensure authenticity towards assessment programmes in the school as a tool that determines the progress of learners.

Due to lack of time and having bigger fish to fry, the PCTs experience in the context of multi-grade schools, found it very difficult to hold their formal meetings. They reported that their meetings were held in an informal setting where everything was done in a haphazard manner. Holding a meeting in this manner might lead to many crucial issues not being dealt with during the meeting. This can even lead to decisions being taken in that meeting to be non-concrete and non-implementable. This also leads me towards arguing for the need of a person solely responsible for management issues in multi-grade schools. Furthermore, the PCTs claimed that

in schools, they also engaged themselves in multi-tasking with attempts of reaching all their areas of performance. A typical example of multi-tasking I refer to is like the one that PCTs cited of coupling their administrative roles with classroom activities. This needs investigation on its own, as to how multi-tasking impact on the performance of the roles performed and the quality of work produced.

#### *7.2.4. PCTs going beyond the call of duty*

Roles performed by PCTs in the context of multi-grade schools are too much for them as compared to the time available in one day. In the previous section, it is asserted that the PCTs spent much of their time with their learners in their multi-grade classes. As a result, the PCTs had to look for other alternative ways for availing opportunities for performing their administrative, leadership and management tasks. The EEA 76 of 1998 of South Africa, promulgates that principals should teach between 10% and 92% in schools. Nonetheless, in this study, PCTs worked more than those hours when they taught their multi-grade classes. The percentage spent by them on teaching on its own is complicated. It is difficult because in their case, the 100% of time allocated is spread across the multiple grades they teach with the attempt of accommodating all subjects with their content areas. In each subject, PCTs are also faced by other class teaching related activities such as planning, assessment, recording and reporting. That on its own requires going beyond the call of duty. This is one of the issues that I would like to bring up as the issue that requires further research. For those who focus on curriculum, one would be interested to know the quality of teaching and learning in the context of classroom that is taught by the PCTs. Due to the pressure and time constraints the PCTs operate under, are they able to cover all the content of subjects as prescribed in the curriculum policy documents. In as far as school management is concerned, it would be ideal to understand the impacts of PCTs teaching their multi-grade classes to their leadership and management of schools.

The analysed data exhibited that the PCTs did not have enough time to perform their leadership and management roles during school hours. These activities included holding meetings, curriculum management, supporting and monitoring, etc. This was as a result of their demanding

condition whereby PCTs had to fully commit themselves in multi-grade class teaching. PCTs used their own time like tea breaks, lunch breaks and after school hours to perform their administrative roles. They also reported that they also used their weekend days like Saturdays and Sundays to perform their administrative roles. This betrays that the PCTs were always prepared to go beyond their allocated time to create additional platforms to perform the roles that they could not perform during the school hours. This then tells us that multi-grade school management is not a task that anyone can take for granted. Due to its demands, the practitioners involved may find themselves having to use their leisure time to perform roles assigned to them. This involves everyone in this context due the fact that the PCTs contended that they had to talk and convince the teachers they worked with so that they could come and work with them during the weekends. Getting support from the teachers they worked with to come over the weekends meant that they had managed to win these teachers to cooperate and work with them. This elicits that these PL 1 teachers understood the nature of the schools where they worked and cooperatively worked with them in this practice as a joint enterprise.

Hoyle (1982) speaks a lot about professionals and he talks of two categories of professionals - the restricted and extended professionals. In this study, the PCTs play a crucial role of being extended professionals. The ability to perform roles that are not part of their job description is one of the indications that they are extended professionals. The ability to perform multiple roles within the period of teaching and learning as indicated in the data analysis chapters indicate that the PCTs are extended professionals. This is opposite to what the restricted professionals would do which is only focusing on their single role or performing what is part of their job description. This exposes that the PCTs maintain their professionalism wherever they are, given the fact that they indicated they felt it was important for them to perform the roles they performed under these conditions and claimed that if they did not perform them there was no one else to do it.

#### *7.2.5. Multi-grade school management, an underestimated exercise*

The findings about the experiences of principals in multi-grade schools exhibited that multi-grade schools were undermined. Underestimation of these schools led to underestimation of the



PCTs and their roles. Even though the study focused on PCTs but I am triggered to cite that the small schools themselves where multi-grade teaching was practised were undermined and not regarded as genuine institutions of teaching and learning. This is informed by the responses from the PCTs where they cited that some principals of other bigger schools did not consider their schools as proper centres of education. This led to underestimation of the principals of these schools within the principals' fraternity. The PCTs were always told to look at the principals of bigger schools for whatever they were doing and these were the remarks that were made by the PCT's supervisors. The issue is why were they always informed to look at other people? Why the supervisor always referred them to other principals for management and administrative tasks? If the principals of bigger schools cannot be told to look at other principals, why were the PCTs not treated in the same manner? In this regard, I suspect an element of doubting their ability from the supervisor. There is no need for treatment that enhances inequality amongst principals in the circuit. The fact that their rank is „principalship“, they deserve similar treatment.

The society itself needs to be conscientised about multi-grade schools and roles played by principals in such schools. The findings betrayed that parents did not understand the amount of work that the principals performed in these schools. Parents as partners believed that principals would always be at school, teaching their children and always available because the working territory was small. Furthermore, in the Education Management Association of South Africa (EMASA) conference held in Durban between the 04<sup>th</sup> and the 06<sup>th</sup> of September 2015, when a presentation about multi-grade teaching principals was made, one of the attendees commented that performing the two crucial roles, school management and teaching multi-grade class would not be a problem because this happens in a small organization. According to him everything is brought closer in the multi-grade school and so there are no problems. Even with the curriculum, he stated that the Foundation Phase can even be taught the same content during the lesson. Assumptions of this nature mislead society and show a very high degree of not understanding the practice. In school management, whatever happens in a bigger school environment also happens in a smaller school context. It is even much better in a bigger school, because there is enough personnel with enough hands, opinions and hands to perform the task. This was not the case in multi-grade schools context I studied; very few hands had to be stretched to multiple tasks in the

school. Teaching the same content in all the grades in the foundation phase would not benefit learners, instead some of the learners would be receiving the content that they are not supposed to receive at their level. So this indicates that this assumption was not made on strong grounds but it was due to underestimation and inadequate knowledge of what happens in multi-grade school environments.

The issues of under-estimation, also spreads even to the District officials when they are not available for support to these schools. The size of a small school does not mean that the roles that are to be performed are also „small“ or few. Whatever happens in a bigger school also happens in a small school. The difference between the two schools is that in a normal, bigger school, there is enough personnel to perform the roles and in a multi-grade school, there is few personnel. Therefore there is a need for on-going support for practitioners in this situation. From the study, the PCTs reported that they had never been to a departmental developmental session focusing on principals and multi-grade teaching and yet it was a practice that they had never been trained for. This makes me to think that this poor support from the Department of Education side is due to the assumption that because the school is small, learners are few and teachers are few, all is easy to manage. Behind this assumption, there is a possibility of a belief that whoever finds himself or herself being in this practice might find it easy to fit. This is not a reality due to the fact that, in the situation, the PCT is faced with two crucial roles in the school - management of the whole school and teaching multi-grade class. Each of these roles consists of multiple roles that have to be performed by practitioners involved. I believe that in the multi-grade school context, relevant training, regular support and monitoring and guidance can bring about change. Multi-grade school practice must not be underestimated by the District office itself which should always be behind it.

In terms of teachers“ appointments, in the South African context, the PCTs are appointed as the lowest paid principals in terms of salary rankings. According to the EEA 76 of 1998, the salaries of principals are determined by the number of learners enrolled in the school, hence the PCTs are appointed at this level. This study uncovered how much they struggled to perform multiple roles

placed on them in this context. Looking at the multiple roles that they play and the complexities that they go through, I believe that determining their salaries based on learners enrolled is unfair on PCTs. Roles that they perform exceed the roles that other principals perform in the schools that they manage. Let it not be the size of the school that counts but roles assigned to principals of school. In this case, the principals that we speak about are also engaged in multi-grade teaching. In terms of their appointment, I believe they are really underestimated compared to their counterparts in other schools. I recommend that their salaries be reviewed and remunerated according to roles which they perform and not sizes of schools.

When Wenger (1998) refers to issues of identity in the practice, he also considers the identities given to us by other people in the society. These are the identities that they develop through their engagements in different activities and experiences in the society. One of the characterisations that he makes is that identity as a negotiated experience is when we define who we are by the ways we experience ourselves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify us. In this study, there is an element of giving principal-cum teachers weaker identity by underestimating the engagements that the PCTs have in the schools that they manage. This conflicts with what I have discussed earlier regarding my personal judgements of the PCTs' identities in relation to ability of performing their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools.

#### *7.2.6. Dilemma; Is it generosity or being desperate?*

The findings in the two previous chapters indicate that the schools where the PCTs worked received very little funding from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. As explained earlier on that in the South African context, funding is drawn according to the Norms and Standards for Funding of Schools, it then stipulates that the total number of learners enrolled in the school is utilised to determine funding. As a result, the multi-grade schools receive very little funding. Similar trend is followed, when it comes to the appointment of teachers, the PPN stipulates that it is the number of learners enrolled in the organization that determines the number

of teachers to be appointed. Due to the specifications outlined, the multi-grade schools were under-resourced centres of education.

Findings unclothed that the PCTs did not get support from parents who were key partners in this situation. The lack of coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders in the school made life miserable for PCTs. In Wenger's (1998), social practice theory, it is advocated that in order for the practice to bear fruit, it should be open to everyone for contributions. It calls for the members of the society to understand what is expected of them and contribute with whatever they have so that the ball rolls in the field. The opposite took place in the context of schools where the PCTs worked. This practice requires serious mutual engagement from the stakeholders so that educational leaders involved do not carry the burden all by themselves. Absence of other stakeholders hinders the performance and the ability to perform by those who are expected to manage schools. Their capability is being negatively impacted due to non-availability of support from stakeholders.

The findings unveiled that, for survival and functionality purposes, the PCTs used much of their own coffers to run schools where they were managing. It further uncoated that they also used much of their own resources, like equipment, to run schools. The lesson learnt with this regard is that in order for them to cope in their practice, they had to find ways of survival to make things possible. For this reason, I have given this section the title citing „desperate“ and „generosity“. With this regard, I believe it would be good if we could further explore this multi-grade school practice and understand if the PCTs are doing what they do because of being desperate and seeking the way of survival in the unpleasant practice or it is the quality of being kind and generous. Their element of generosity gives them credit since they do not stay and wait for the Provincial Department of Education to provide; instead they look for ways out of the problem surrounding them.

Drawing from this action of the PCTs, utilising their own monies to run schools, I learnt that they developed a sense of ownership of the schools they managed. The sense of ownership stretched even to the programmes that the schools ran. In some instances, the PCTs were cited claiming that if they did not do whatever they did in schools no one else could do it. This then resonates with what Wenger (1998) states about the importance of understanding the practice. He cites that in the community of practice, there are squaring institutional demands which the practitioners have look for ways of maintaining them. Wenger (1998) further states that it is the professionals who should seek to generate specific perspectives and terms to enable accomplishing what needs to be done. This elicits that being engaged in leadership and management of a small, multi-grade school really requires this element of thinking or being innovative about your own programmes of survival. In addition to this, when Wenger speaks about the importance of learning in the practice, he cites that it is through learning that the practitioners are able to develop their repertoire, styles and discourse which is what the PCTs did through their implementation of their survival strategies in their practice.

#### *7.2.7. Human relations*

Contributions made by good human relationship in the school were noted by the contributions that the teachers that worked with the PCTs had in the school. Their availability and ability to work with them after school hours and over weekends indicated that the relationship was very positive in schools. The PCTs maintained this relationship and it worked for them because they were able to get the support from the other teachers in schools even outside school hours.

Wenger (1998) talks about the importance of understanding the practice in a learning process. He cites that through learning, the practitioners are able to shape themselves in such a way they fit well in their practice. In line with this, he further states that through learning, the practitioners become aware of what is expected of them in their joint enterprise. Through their understanding, they are able to negotiate the full complexity of their mutual engagement.

The PCTs managed to acquire some of the resources from the principals of their neighbouring schools. They revealed that the principals that offered assistance to them had voluntarily offered

themselves to render those services. This elicits the level of good human relations that these schools had with their colleagues. This is one of the strategies that worked very well for the PCTs in schools. This uncovers the importance of roles that the other schools can play in situations where other schools face problems. Principals of helping schools showed a very high degree of understanding of the situations in multi-grade schools. At this juncture, I am triggered to believe that the good human relationship skills that the PCTs had with other schools, is the positively contributing factor with this regard. This then tells me that no matter what the circumstances are in the practice, but people around you can play a massive role to assist you to cope with the situation.

#### *7.2.8. PCTs: Resilient practitioners*

Findings in this enquiry exposed the PCTs facing a lot of challenges in their practice in the context of multi-grade schools. Conditions under which they functioned showed not to be conducive for them to perform up to their level best. However, having cited some of the negative experiences they came across in this situation, the PCTs demonstrated a very positive attitude and always put their best effort to ensure smooth functionality in the school where they were stationed. Their ability to stretch their arms, attempting to execute their multiple tasks exposed them as very resilient practitioners. These findings are congruent with the findings for the study of principals in multi-grade schools in the South Africa's Western Cape Province. Davids (2011), one of the principals involved in the study proclaimed that no matter how hard it is, as the principal of the small school, he made sure that all roles received his attention.

However, in this study, the PCTs revealed that due to them having many irons on the fire, they ended up not doing things up to their satisfaction. This was largely due to their multiple roles' demands in schools which made each role not to receive adequate time. The PCTs commented that they were not satisfied about the quality of work that they did with their learners and they did not have adequate time for individualism when teaching due to circumstances. Furthermore, the findings testified that the PCTs did not get enough time to perform their administrative, leadership and management roles at school due to their commitment in multi-grade class

teaching. This feeling of dissatisfaction is due to assigned roles versus time that the PCTs have in a single day. The feeling of being dissatisfied about the quality of your service delivery may lead to disillusionment and discomfort due to societal judgements and this can lead to poor performance. However, in this study, despite that the PCTs had that dissatisfaction feeling, they are seen pushing forward attempting to do their level best and they do not entertain their emotional crisis. From this, I also learn a very high degree of honesty from the PCTs, when they become brave enough to disclose that they are dissatisfied themselves about what they do. It calls for a certain characteristic and personality to be able to talk about your own weak points in a professional practice. Honesty is one of the principles that are enshrined in the South African context according to the Principles of Batho Pele.

As discussed earlier in this chapter that the PCTs experienced non-support from the stakeholders who were supposed to render support; this could also contribute to them being demotivated and discouraged. Working with parents not cooperating with them as parents of beneficiaries contributed negatively to their ego. All the negative remarks made by parents about them could contribute to destroying their potential to perform. Seeing the local District office officials not coming closer to them for support, contributions and developments in the unusual situation could also lead to demotivation. The PCTs could be hurt by all these negativities around their practice but in this case they continued looking for their own avenues of bringing about better performance in their practice irrespective of non-support. PCTs portrayed themselves as committed professionals in their practice, who did not depend or look at people around them but focused on their own mission. That symbolizes being passionate about one's career and field of practice. The PCTs showed to be very resilient and they managed to overcome all those barriers which attempted to hinder their commitment.

This study was conducted during the period when the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education was busy with its Transformation of the Schooling System whereby one of its purposes was to address the issue of non-viable and multi-grade schools. The Department of Education had proposed to close these schools. The data revealed that the PCTs feared for their future due to the

proposed closure of their schools which would mean that the schools be merged with other bigger schools. They had a concern about their positions in those schools where they would be placed. They were also concerned about leaving their homes and beginning a new life away from them should they be placed in schools far from their homes. The PCTs functioned under these conditions which were surrounded by uncertainty. This did not affect their spirit of working: they continued to look forward and stretched their arms and executed their roles in the multi-grade school context. What the capability approach focuses on is the ability to perform the functions assigned which I believe the PCTs managed to do in spite of the then proposed programme of addressing non-viable and small schools by closing them. Interestingly, some of these principals looked positively to this TSS and maintained that this would bring change in the way things were done in their schools. They claimed that the proposed change would bring stability in programmes whereby there would be clarity on roles distribution in new merged schools. All these are some symbols of resilience from PCTs. The PCTs were able to see positive things around the TSS.

#### *7.2.9. What do we learn about PCTs and multi-grade schools?*

The fact is that in most of rural African parts, there are areas where the population is very low in such a way that in those areas schools become very small and offer multi-grade classes. It is also non-arguable that multi-grade schools are some of the institutions achieving the EFA goals. From this study, I have had the opportunity to explore the experiences that the principals of these schools went through in this context. As much as the study revealed that the PCTs attempted to do their level best to perform their multiple roles, I would say it is not an easy exercise to engage in due to its complexity and demands. Performing the two crucial roles in this context, is not an easy task. The PCTs end up spending a lot of time in their multi-grade classes during the day and they are very limited in performing their administrative, leadership and management roles. Even in their classrooms, they are faced by multiple subjects to be taught with their multiple activities to be performed. It would be ideal for the principals of multi-grade schools to be treated in the same manner like the other principals of schools who teach according to the stipulations of the EEA, which is between 10 to 92% of their time depending on the needs of their schools. This can help them to have adequate time to perform their management roles which have a greater



contribution towards the smooth functionality of the school. As it is now, a multi-grade school where the principal is involved in teaching a multi-grade class, is like a capital of emotional battles for principals.

As much as the PCTs as professionals showed to be resilient in the whole situation, looking at the way they behaved themselves but the conditions under which they functioned were not conducive, the multi-grade schools are non-viable. The learner is sent to school with the purpose of enriching himself with the knowledge gained through the process of teaching and learning facilitated by the teacher. In these multi-grade schools, some of the PCTs taught three grades and yet they were faced with the management of the school. The concern lies on proper implementation of the learning process by one teacher across three grades. Is it feasible for the PCTs to do it? Looking at the South African curriculum itself with its grade levels and the specific content taught in each grade, I think learners are being disadvantaged by this situation. The PCTs disclosed that they found it difficult to manage curriculum implementation in schools due to their commitment in other responsibilities. This also raises concerns since what they are unable to manage falls under the core business of the school. Proper functioning schools with adequate human resources to perform all the roles, including curriculum management and handling reasonable number of learners and roles are needed. If conditions are like this in the context of multi-grade schools, we are not solving the problem or we produce learners who have not been taught all the content they are supposed to receive in each level. If the taught curriculum is not managed, how can we then candidly claim that we are confident with what happens in multi-grade schools? If multi-grade schools have to continue, conditions have to be improved in order for practitioners to function at ease in them.

### ***7.3.Summary for recommendations***

From the findings of this study, the recommendations are summarized as follows:

- Policies that are being implemented in the South African education context suit environment of schools where everything and systems are properly structured and could

be easily implemented. Examples of these policies are the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements, Norms and Standards for Funding of Schools, Post Provisioning Norms etc. For principals operating in multi-grade schools where there are challenging conditions, these policies are implemented but practitioners involved find it very difficult to operate adhering to them. I therefore recommend reviewing of these policies in such a way that practitioners in multi-grade schools can also be accommodated and find working in this environment non-stressful. Specific areas need attention so that multi-grade practice conditions can improve and schools become quality centres for ensuring that EFA goals are achieved.

- In terms of the Employment of Educators Act 78 of 1998, principals of small schools are the least paid principals due to their ranking in principalship posts in South Africa. Considering this Act, their salary is determined by looking at the sizes of the schools they manage which is made up of few learners and teachers. The findings have revealed that these principals are faced by multiple roles in these schools and they perform roles that are performed by more than two or three personnel in normal schools. It has also been made visible that in multi-grade schools, principals do not follow their job description as principals but have multiple job descriptions and yet they are the least paid principals. I therefore recommend that their salaries not be determined by the number of learners enrolled but by considering their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade school. It requires a certain specific character for a person to be able to manage a multi-grade school.
- From the findings it has been clear that the principal-cum teachers in multi-grade schools receive very little support or not at all from the Department of Education. This is very important for them to feel that they are part and parcel of the education system even though their schools are categorised as non-viable. All the teachers involved in this phenomenon were not trained for multi-grade classes in their initial training and their training was for normal mono-grades only and yet they found themselves entangled in this situation. Therefore, I recommend regular visits for support by the District office

officials to principals and teachers of multi-grade schools to address the perceived uncaring attitude of the Department of Basic Education.

- While these schools still operate, I believe there is a need for professional development sessions for teachers practising in this context. I therefore urge the Department of Education to work with the Education Institutions for Higher learning in designing the programmes for equipping, skilling and preparing the teachers as practitioners in multi-grade schools. Certain specific skills, knowledge and attitude are required when functioning in the multi-grade schools and that can be acquired through proper training. This training could include leadership and management of multi-grade schools principals as managers managing under challenging conditions.

My recommendations also include aspects for future research.

#### ***7.4.Recommendations for further research***

From the research findings, there are emanating recommendations for further research under study and they are as follows:

- The study focused on principals of schools only and the focus was on their experiences as heads of institutions faced by multiple roles in multi-grade schools. Together with these principals, there also Post Level one teachers who also operate under the same conditions as multi-grade teachers. These are also the same teachers who have been reported to be assisting the principal-cum teachers in their daily roles. For further research, it would also be ideal to hear their voices on their experiences as teachers involved in this practice.
- Principal-cum teachers have been portrayed as over-committed teachers towards their work and utilized most of their spare time for the benefit of their schools and learners. In order to attempt to ensure quality, they used their morning and afternoon hours with their learners and used weekends to perform their leadership and management roles. Further research is needed from them as to how all this affect their private family life. The impact

of multi-grade school leadership and management towards social life of principals engaged in the practice.

- The study has revealed that one of the strategies they employ to manage is an act I call “multi-tasking within one task”. When doing this, they are revealed as teachers who can give learners some work to do and while learners do that work, they continue to push their leadership, administrative and management roles while in the classroom supervising learners. I therefore think it would be good to know how “multi-tasking within one task” impacts on learners.
- The findings have revealed that the schools received no support from the District officials in the multi-grade school context. Another area of research would be to investigate what hinders the District officials to support multi-grading schools. I believe answers to this question can assist the Department of Education to also assist them if there is a need and schools can also understand as to what the barriers are.

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education

Department:  
Education  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8/299 - 8

Mr Sikhulekile G Ngcobo  
P. O. Box 67647  
SCOTTSBURGH  
4180

Dear Mr Ngcobo

#### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct a pilot and research entitled: **EXPLORING THE PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES AND COPING STRATEGIES IN MULTI-GRADE SCHOOLS. A STUDY OF FIVE PRINCIPALS IN MULTI-GRADE SCHOOLS IN IXOPO CIRCUIT IN KWAZULU NATAL**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 March 2014 to 28 February 2016.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following school/s and/or institution/s in the Sisonke District of the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education.

**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
Head of Department: Education

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty

#### KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa  
PHYSICAL: Office G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 3418610 Fax : 033 341 8612  
EMAIL ADDRESS: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za CALL CENTRE: 0860 506 263



**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**Private Bag X 01  
Scottsville  
3201**

**The Director: Resource Planning**

**Sibusiso Alwar**

**Research Unit**

**Private Bag X 9137**

**Pietermaritzburgh**

**3200**

**Sir/Madam**

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN FIVE PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS IN SISONKE DISTRICT**

I am Ngcobo Sikhulekile General, persal number, 6152 9222; student number, 206 520 424, a student presently enrolled for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education Leadership, Management and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). I am required to write a thesis as part of the requirements of my studies. My research will focus on experiences of principals in small schools as principals of schools and simultaneously engaged in teaching multi-grade classes. In this study, I will need to have five principals as my unit of analysis as well as five post- level one teachers in the schools where these principals are managers.

I therefore request your permission to implement my data collection techniques employed in the study with the principals and post level one teachers of Forest Primary School, Flats Primary School, Sloppy Primary School, Wetlands Primary School and Hills Primary School. The data collection process will be conducted during non-official contact times to avoid any interruption to educational programmes. The participants will be made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time should they so desire. Their written consent will also be taken into consideration. If you have any questions pertaining to this study, you may contact me at 071 523 8694/078 100 4122 or [sgngcobo@scottnet.co.za](mailto:sgngcobo@scottnet.co.za). You may also contact my supervisor, Dr Irene Muzvidziwa at 076 966 8600 / (033) 260 6095 or at [MuzvidziwaI@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:MuzvidziwaI@ukzn.ac.za).

I look forward to your positive response.

Yours faithfully,

Sikhulekile General Ngcobo

(Student no: 206 520 424)



21 November 2013

Mr SG Ngcobo 206520424  
School of Education  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Ngcobo

Protocol reference number: HSS/1209/013D

Project title: Exploring the principles' leadership experiences and coping strategies in multi-grade schools: A study of five principals of multi-grade schools in Ixopo Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal

**Full Approval – Expedited**

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted Full Approval

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project; Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Irene Muzv'dziwa  
cc Academic Leader: Dr MN Davids  
cc School Admin: Mr Thabo Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

## APPENDIX 4



**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**Private Bag X 01  
Scottsville  
3201**

**LETTER OF INVITATION**

**Dear Sir / Madam**

I am sending this letter of invitation to you as a principal who might be interested in participating in a study about leadership experiences of principals of multi-grade schools. My name is Ngcobo Sikhulekile General and I am currently a Doctor of Philosophy Degree candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am engaged in a study which aims to explore the leadership experiences of principals of small schools and the strategies that they employ to manage this situation. Multi-grade teaching is the solution in small schools that have low enrolment figures. In these schools, one of the teachers who handle multi-grade classes is the school principal. In the context of South Africa, there is no study that has been conducted to explore leadership experiences of these principals as well as the strategies that they employ to manage this situation. In this regard, I have identified you as one of the people who can help me by being my unit of analysis. I would very much like to conduct this research of school principals engaged in multi-grade teaching in the school where you are you stationed, and work

closely with you, particularly to understand your experience of working with these principals in schools.

The title of the project read thus:

Exploring the principals' leadership experiences and coping strategies in multi-grade schools in Ixopo Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal.

Research questions.

1. What are the daily roles and responsibilities of principal-cum teachers and how they experience their multiple roles in the context of multi-grade schools?
2. How do principal-cum teachers seek to lead and manage their roles?
3. What can we learn from the principal-cum teachers regarding ways of better leading and managing multi-grade schools?

Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance or competence of you as a teacher. Your identity will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. All the written, audio or video recordings made will be sent to the university for safe keeping after the study has been completed. I undertake to uphold your autonomy and you will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to you. In this regard, you will be asked to complete a consent form. Furthermore, feedback will be given to you during and at the end of the project. I undertake to take responsibility of any financial expenses that may incur during the study.

As a student, I can be contacted at these numbers, 071 523 8694 or 078 100 4122 and email address is [sgngcobo@scottnet.co.za](mailto:sgngcobo@scottnet.co.za). Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have any queries or questions you would like answered. My supervisor, Dr Irene Muzvidziwa can be contacted on (033) 260 6095, 076 966 8600 or email address, [MuzvidziwaI@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:MuzvidziwaI@ukzn.ac.za).

Yours sincerely

Ngcobo Sikhulekile General (Student number, 206 520 424)

**APPENDIX 5****DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT**

I ..... (Full name of participant)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research  
project, and I consent to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am a liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I **consent/ do not consent** to this interview being recorded.

**SIGNATURE OF THE PARTICIPANT**

---

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 6

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS)

1. As a principal of a small school, also engaged in teaching a multi-grade class, can you briefly explain to me your daily roles and responsibilities? How do you manage these roles?
2. How do you feel about being the principal of a school and also engaged in teaching multi-grade class?
3. Can you share with me your experiences of the relationship between you as the principal and the teachers that you are working with? Are there any contributions they have in your position?
4. Have you ever attended a workshop on multi-grade teaching? What support does the Department of Education provide you with?
5. If you consider yourself in this situation, are you able to provide good quality school leadership and good quality education to your learners? What are the challenges? What are the achievements? How do you cope?
6. In your school, there are few personnel to distribute duties to and there are always tasks to be performed and deadlines to be met. How do you make sure that this situation does not disadvantage your school and you meet the deadlines?
7. Principals have got a lot of duties attached to their positions like submissions and attending meetings, what provisions do you make when you have to attend to meetings to ensure that learners in your class get all what they are supposed to get?
8. How do you ensure balance between your school management roles and teaching roles?
9. As a principal you have got a number of tasks that you have to perform. You have administration, leadership and management and teaching multi-grade class roles placed on you. Can you share with me your strategies of handling all these roles simultaneously?
10. How can you describe the attitude of other principals towards you as a principal of a small school?
11. There are many things said about these schools, one of them is that they are facing closure, what is your comments towards that?
12. Describe your experience in this situation.

**APPENDIX 7****INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS FOR POST LEVEL ONE TEACHERS**

1. Can you briefly explain to me your principal's daily roles and responsibilities in the context of a multi-grade school?
2. Are there any contributions you make to assist your principal to perform his/her roles as a school principal and a multi-grade teacher?
3. Do you have any administration roles that you have in the school management in this context?
4. What provisions does your school principal make for learners when s/he has to attend for meetings?
5. Your principal is also engaged in teaching multi-grade class, what are the strategies that s/he employs to perform both the key roles placed on him/her?
6. In your own opinion, is your school principal able to provide good quality education and good quality school management? If yes, what do you think makes him/her to be successful? Substantiate your answer.
7. In your context, there are few people to distribute work too. How does your principal make sure that even though your school does not have adequate human resource, it still complies and meets all the deadlines?

## **APPENDIX 8**

### **FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. As principals of small schools, also engaged in teaching a multi-grade class, can you briefly explain to me your daily roles and responsibilities?
2. How do you feel about being principals of small schools and also engaged in teaching multi-grade classes?
3. Can you share with me your experiences of the relationship between you as principals and the teachers that you are working with? Are there any contributions they have in your position?
4. Have you ever attended a workshop on multi-grade teaching? What support does the Department of Education provide you with?
5. If you consider yourselves in this situation, are you able to provide good quality school leadership and good quality education to your learners?
6. In your schools, there are few personnel to distribute workloads to, how do you make sure that this does not disadvantage you and you meet all the deadlines for submissions?
7. Principals have got a lot of duties attached to their positions like submissions and attending meetings, what provisions do you make when you have to attend to meetings to ensure that learners in your classes get all what they are supposed to get?
8. As principals you have got a number of tasks that you have to perform. You have administration, leadership and management and teaching multi-grade class roles placed on you. Can you share with me your strategies of handling all these roles simultaneously?

### OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

[illegible]

#### NOTES ON OBSERVATION

1. Principals will be observed when performing their daily roles as principals of schools and teachers of multi-grade classes.
2. It will be observed how they manage these two roles simultaneously.
3. One of the key areas will be to identify the key challenges that these principals have, if there is any.
4. Another area will be to observe the strategies that these principals employ in this situation.